DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 095 060 SO 007 688

AUTHOR	Crane, Robert
TITLE	The First Social Studies Assessment: An Overview. National Assessment of Educational Progress. Report No. 03-SS-00.
INSTITUTION	Education Commission of the States, Denver, Colo. National Assessment of Educational Progress.
SPONS AGENCY	National Center for Educational Statistics (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO	R-03-SS-00
PUB DATE	Jun 74
NOTE	77p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 ($0.50)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$4.20 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	Achievement; Achievement Tests; Attitudes; *Educational Assessment; *Educational Research; Elementary School Students; Evaluation; Knowledge Level; *National Competency Tests; Racial Characteristics; Secondary School Students; Sex (Characteristics); Skills; *Social Sciences; *Social Studies; Young Adults
IDENTIFIERS	*National Assessment of Educational Progress

ABSTRACT

Discussed in this report are the results of the first social studies assessment from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a project of the Education Commission of the States. Exercises especially designed to test the attainment of social studies skills, knowledges, and attitudes were administered to a random sampling of 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds, and adults. Among the findings are the following: (1) Less than one half of America's 17-year-olds and young adults understand how to use all parts of a simple ballot; (2) relatively few Americans can read and interpret graphs, maps, or tables effectively; (3) a rather large gap exists between the attitudes Americans profess to hold and the actions they take in specific situations; (4) young Americans generally have very little knowledge about the contributions of minority groups to our culture and history; (5) blacks show a marked disadvantage in skills, knowledge, and attitudes assessed at all age levels; (6) females outperform males on both skill and attitude exercises during the school years, but fall behind the males by age adult; and (7) Southeasterners consistently perform below the national levels of success in all three areas. (Author/RM)

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

A Project of the Education Commission of the States

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4	Results by sex, region and size of community	April 1971
7	Results by color, parental education, size and type of community; balanced results	May 1973

Citizenship, 1969-70

2	National Results	November 1970
6	Results by sex, region and size of community	July 1971
9	Results by color, parental education, size and type of community	May 1972

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ED 095060

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THE FIRST SOCIAL STUDIES ASSESSMENT:

An Overview

REPORT 03-SS-00

SP 007 688

June 1974

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402

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Staff support was provided by:
Operations Department
Exercise Development Department
Research and Analysis Department
Utilization/Applications Department
Data Processing Department
Communications Department (ECS)

This publication was prepared and produced pursuant to agreements with the National Center for Educational Statistics of the U.S. Office of Education with additional funds from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Ford Foundation's Fund for the Advancement of Education. The statements and views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position and policy of the U.S. Office of Education or other grantors but are solely the responsibility of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a project of the Education Commission of the States.

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FOREWORD

The National Assessment of Educational Progress is an information-gathering project which surveys the educational attainments of 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds and adults (ages 26-35) in 10 subject areas: Art, Career and Occupational Development, Citizenship, Literature, Mathematics, Music, Reading, Science, Social Studies and Writing. Two areas are assessed every year, and all areas are periodically reassessed in order to measure educational progress. Each assessment is the product of several years' work by a great many educators, scholars and lay persons from all over the country. Initially, these people design objectives for each area, proposing specific goals which they feel Americans should be achieving in the course of their education. These goals are reviewed by more people and then passed along to developers of tests, whose task it is to create measurement tools appropriate to the objectives.

When the exercises prepared by the test developers have passed extensive reviews by subject matter specialists and measurement experts, they are administered to probability samples of various populations. The people who comprise those samples are chosen in such a way that the results of their assessment can be generalized to an entire national population. That is, on the basis of the performance of about 2,500 9-year-olds on a given exercise, we can generalize about the probable performance of all 9-year-olds in the nation.

After assessment data have been collected, scored and analyzed, National Assessment publishes reports such as this one to present the results as accurately as possible. Not all exercise results have been released for publication. Because National Assessment will administer some of the same Social Studies exercises again in five years to determine whether the performance level of Americans has improved or declined, it is essential that they be kept secret in order to preserve the integrity of the study. If the unreleased exercises can be discussed without revealing their content, they are examined. However, the discussion is much less detailed than it is for the released exercises.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress also publishes a *General Information Yearbook* which describes all major aspects of the assessment's operation. The reader who desires more detailed information about how National Assessment defines its groups, prepares and scores its exercises, designs its sample and analyzes and reports its results should consult *Report 03/04-GIY, General Information Yearbook.*

WHAT NATIONAL ASSESSMENT DATA IN SOCIAL STUDIES INDICATE: SELECTED OBSERVATIONS

1. Less than one half of America's 17-year-olds and young adults understand how to use all parts of a simple ballot.

2. Relatively few Americans can read and interpret graphs, maps or tables effectively.

3. A rather large gap exists between the attitudes Americans profess to hold and the actions they take in specific situations.

4. Exercises involving the recall of factual information are most difficult at all age levels.

5. Young Americans generally have very little knowledge about the contributions of minority groups to our culture and history.

6. Results indicate that one's out-of-school experiences are often as important as what one learns in school.

7. Blacks show a marked disadvantage in skills, knowledges and attitudes assessed at all age levels.

8. Females outperform males on skill exercises during the school years, but fall behind the males by age adult.

9. Females outperform males during the school years in the attitude exercises, but do less well than males at age adult.

10. Males consistently outperform females on knowledge exercises at all four age levels.

11. Southeasterners consistently perform below the national levels of success in all three areas.

CHAPTER 1

HOW NATIONAL ASSESSMENT SOCIAL STUDIES RESULTS ARE REPORTED

The Scope and Purpose of the Overview

Highlights of the assessment

The information provided in the overview only highlights the data that have been collected in the Social Studies assessment, and presents only a sampling of the most interesting and important results. We realize that, except for those involved in serious educational research, few people have the time, inclination or expertise to wade through and digest all of the information we have gathered. Yet most of us are interested in the "state of American education" and would like to know how young Americans, ages 9, 13, 17 and 26-35, perform in the field of social studies. What are their strengths and weaknesses? What do they know? How do they feel about important American values? What skills do they have? This report will focus on these questions and provide a general framework for answering them.[1]

How the Exercises are Classified

Skills, knowledges and attitudes

The Social Studies exercises have been divided into three broad areas--skills, knowledges and attitudes. Within these areas the exercises have been further classified into a number of topics and subtopics for purposes of analysis. A complete description of this classification system follows. Areas and topics are listed; subtopics are expressed as goals commonly found in social studies objectives.

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[1]People requiring more complete technical documentation of the results will be able to refer to Report 03-SS-20, the statistical report. It will provide comprehensive data for each exercise and topic.

Classification of Social Studies Exercises

Area
Topic
Subtopic

I. Skills
- A. Obtaining information
  1. Raises questions and seeks answers related to a variety of issues
  2. Identifies sources most suitable to solve a particular problem or find particular information
  3. Uses standard reference sources and aids to locate information
- B. Interpreting information
  1. Uses basic problem solving techniques of the social sciences to interpret information of various kinds
  2. Interprets graphs and maps effectively
  3. Uses a variety of non-traditional sources of information

II. Knowledges
- A. Economics
  1. Understands some of the basic characteristics of economic systems that are common to all industrial societies
- B. Geography
  1. Has knowledge of worldwide spatial distribution and interrelationship of the major features of man's physical and cultural environment
- C. History
  1. Understands some of the major developments in United States history
  2. Understands some of the major developments in world history
- D. Political science
  1. Knows some of the individuals and groups responsible for making government decisions
  2. Understands some of the rights and responsibilities granted in the Constitution
  3. Knows something about the election process and the role of political parties
  4. Understands some of the processes involved in political socialization

III. Attitudes
- A. Rights of the First Amendment
  1. Believes in the freedoms of the

First Amendment and can justify that belief

B. The worth of the individual
   1. Believes people should become involved in making decisions that affect their lives
   2. Has a sense of responsibility for the interest of others
   3. Respects the views and feelings of all people
   4. Believes in the rule of law and can justify that belief

The Exercise Identification System

The exercise identification system in Social Studies provides the reader with specific information about (1) whether the exercise is released or unreleased, (2) the main topic and subtopic within which it is categorized, (3) its placement within a subtopic and (4) what its contents are. Once the fundamentals of this system are understood, the reader can learn a great deal about an exercise by simply looking at its identifier.

The following example illustrates how this system works.

Exercise identification system illustrated

RSOO8A: The first letter in the identifier indicates that the exercise is released (R) or unreleased (U).

RSOO8A: The second letter indicates the area within which the exercise is classified. This will always be skills (S), knowledges (K) or attitudes (A).

RSOO8A: The third letter indicates the topic--in this case "obtaining information."

RSOO8A: The next two digits indicate the exercise placement with a topic.

RSOO8A: Sometimes the last two digits are followed by a letter--A through F. These letters indicate the exercise was one part of a multipart exercise.

RSOO8A: Spell a Word/Dictionary
Finally, all released exercises, and

those unreleased exercises that can be described without giving away their content, have a short description to remind the reader of their general content.

All of this description is aimed at making Exercise RS008A, Spell a Word/Dictionary, understandable without having to present it in its entirety every time it is discussed. The actual exercise is presented below:

Which one of the following would be BEST to use to find how to spell a word?

- ● A dictionary
- ○ An encyclopedia
- ○ A globe
- ○ A map
- ○ A newspaper
- ○ I don't know.

How National Results are Presented

Age comparisons

National Assessment exercises are administered to 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds and young adults ages 26-35. However, all four age groups are not asked to respond to all the exercises. In some cases an exercise is administered at only one age, for example to 9-year-olds. Others are given at two or more age levels and are called overlaps. The national results on overlaps can be compared across ages and often we do so. The results provide general information about how age affects performance, and indicate if particular skills, knowledges and attitudes are age specific or perhaps school related.

How Group Results are Presented

National Assessment divides the national population into various groups of people in order to provide

Variables identified

data about certain types of schools and students. The variables used for this division are region of the country, sex, color, parental education and size and type of community. They are defined as follows:

Region

The country has been divided into four regions--Southeast, West, Central and Northeast--in order to present results for various regions relative to the national results.

Sex

Results are also presented for males and for females.

Color

Currently, we present results for Blacks and Whites.

Parental education

The four parental education categories are defined by the highest level of education attained by *either*

of a person's parents. The no high school category is comprised of all people who indicated that neither parent went to high school. The some high school category consists of all those who indicated that the parent with the most education attended high school but did not graduate. In the graduated from high school category are all those who indicated that at least one parent graduated from high school, and in the post high school group are all who indicated that at least one parent received some post high school education. (This may mean college, but it also includes adult education courses of any kind or vocational training.)

Size and type of community (STOC)

The groups within this variable are defined by the size of a person's community and an occupational profile of the area his or her school serves.

Low metro. People in this group attend schools in cities with populations greater than 150,000; the schools serve areas in which a high proportion of the residents are on welfare or not regularly employed.

Extreme rural. People in this group attend schools in a community having a population less than 3,500. Most residents in the area the school serves are farmers or farm workers.

High metro. Individuals in this group attend schools within the city limits or residential area served by a city with a population greater than 150,000; the area served by the school consists primarily of professional or managerial personnel.

Main big city. These are students attending schools in a big city (population greater than 200,000) who are not included in either the low metro or high metro groups.

Medium city. Individuals in this group attend schools in cities with populations between 25,000 and 200,000.

Small places. People in this group attend schools in a community of less than 25,000 inhabitants.

Urban fringe. People in this group attend schools in the metropolitan area served by a city with

more than 200,000 inhabitants; the school and the area it serves are outside of the city limits.

Group Differences from the National Percentage

The tables in Chapters 2-4 present national percentages of success by age only. But it is interesting also to know how individual groups performed and how their performances compared to the national results. These groups are defined by region, sex, color, parental education and size and type of community, as previously noted. If a group's percentage is lower than the national percentage, the difference is expressed as a negative number; otherwise, it is a positive number.

Summary of differences

In a given set of exercises (e.g., all attitude exercises), a group's achievement can be summarized conveniently by examining its differences from national percentages of success. For example, if 70% of the nation's 9-year-olds correctly answer a given exercise while 73% of the 9-year-olds in the Northeast correctly answer the same exercise, the Northeast difference is +3.

If we wish to discuss Northeast performance across a number of exercises, the single most useful number is the median difference. However, a more complete picture of a group's typical performance emerges from examination of the entire range of differences or, more conveniently, the middle 50% of the exercise differences. The group summary exhibit in this chapter depicts not only the median differences for each group, but the range including the middle 50% of the exercise differences as well.

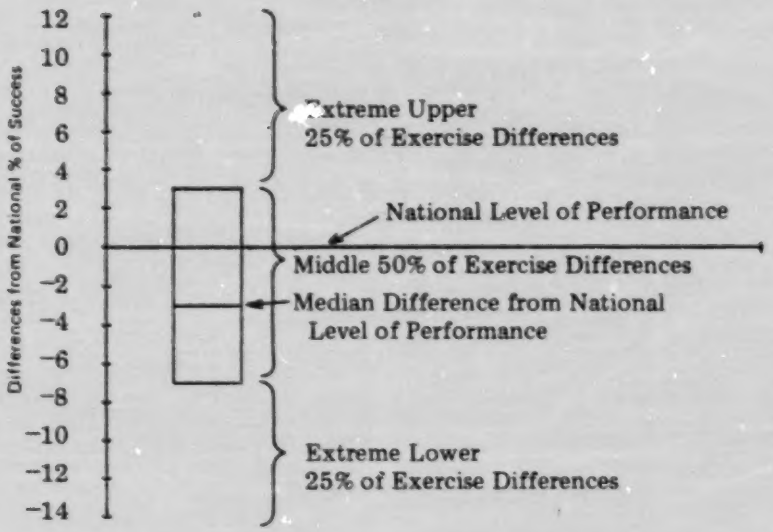
Since different sets of exercises were presented to individuals of different ages, the number of exercises or exercise parts for which group difference have been computed varies across the four age levels.

If a group's performance on any individual exercise deviates considerably from the patterns established in the overall summary data, the deviation is discussed in the text.

Exhibit A explained

Exhibit A presents a sample plot of group differences at age 9. Differences on all 15 exercises range from +12 to -14, but since only the middle half of the differences are shown, the bar is plotted from only +3 to -7. The median difference, -3, is indicated by the heavy line.

EXHIBIT A. How Differences from the National Percentages of Success are Reported: Sample Graph



CHAPTER 2

SKILLS

The new social studies puts emphasis on thinking skills

Although skill development has always been a major objective in the school curriculum, recent criticism of social studies teaching suggests perhaps that social studies programs have, in practice, not been directed sufficiently toward the attainment of this goal. For years the social studies were overly concerned with the accumulation of descriptive facts, often obsolete, irrelevant or forgotten before students had either digested or applied them. Beginning in the mid-sixties, the "new" social studies, sensitive to this criticism, began to stress the teaching of basic thinking skills and the orientation of curriculum materials and teaching strategy began to shift.

Assessment asks: Have students mastered basic thinking skills?

Among the important questions considered in this assessment is whether or not young Americans have mastered some of the basic thinking skills considered crucial by the subject matter experts. Have the changes suggested by the experts filtered down to the schools and students themselves? In attempting to answer some of the questions, a variety of skills were probed. For the purposes of analysis these were divided into two topics: obtaining information and interpreting information. Clearly there is a great deal of overlap between and among basic skill competencies, and these divisions should be considered no more than an organizing framework. The topics are further divided into subtopics directed at the following questions: Are young Americans able to raise questions and seek answers related to a variety of issues? Can they identify sources most suitable to solve a particular problem or to find particular information, and use standard reference sources and aids to locate information? Do they use basic problem solving techniques of the social sciences? Can they interpret maps, graphs and tables effectively? Are they able to use non-traditional sources of information to draw conclusions? National Assessment has explored these skill competencies in a variety of exercises, providing some baseline data for future comparison and at least some tentative answers for the present.

As in the other areas explored by the National Assessment of the Social Studies, not all skill exercises were administered at all age levels. Table 1 indicates the number of skill exercises administered at each age level by area, topic and subtopic.

TABLE 1. Number of Skill Exercises by Area, Topic and Subtopic

	Age Level			
	9	13	17	Adult
I. Skills/general area	43	51	41	39
A. Skills/obtaining information	29	23	10	9
1. Raises questions and seeks answers related to a variety of issues	7	7	3	3
2. Identifies sources most suitable to solve a particular problem or find particular information	18	11	5	4
3. Uses standard reference sources and aids to locate information	4	5	2	2
B. Skills/interpreting information	14	28	31	30
1. Uses basic problem solving techniques of the social sciences to interpret information of various kinds	12	15	18	18
2. Interprets graphs, maps and tables effectively	0	7	7	7
3. Interprets a variety of non-traditional sources of information	2	6	6	5

Overall National Performance

How to use Table 2 to compare results for different skill exercises

Table 2 provides an exercise-by-exercise enumeration of the skills area. The exercises are organized by the National Assessment topics, obtaining and interpreting information, and within these by the various subtopics as well. The exercise number, a short description of the exercise, the skill competency required and the national percentage of success is provided for each exercise. When exercises were not administered at a given age, two dashes (--) appear in the table. If a comparison of the results for a group of exercises at any given age level is desired, it is only necessary to read vertically down the page in that group. For example, readers may wonder how well young Americans, age 13, performed on the National Assessment exercises dealing with map and graph interpretation (II B). By looking at the chart, one can quickly determine how well 13-year-olds did on these exercises. Although over three fourths of the 13-year-olds could at least read bar and line graphs (USI22, RSI23), the

TABLE 2. Complete Listing of Skills Area Exercises

Exercise #	Exercise Description	Nat'l Level of Acceptable Performance (Percent) Age 9	Age 13	Age 17	Adult
A. Obtaining information					
1. Raises questions and seeks answers related to a variety of issues.					
	Shows interest in people with cultural differences.				
RS001	Man from Peru	69	--	--	--
US002	Girl traveler	79	--	--	--
RS003AB	Learn about people from other lands	83	84	--	--
US003CD	Unreleased	77	82	--	--
US003EF	Unreleased	74	71	--	--
US004	Ceylon pen pal	67	82	--	--
	Shows interest in areas of public interest.				
RS005	Questioning citizens about their work	73	67	66	62
US006B	Evaluating politicians/Raising appropriate questions	--	70	75	76
RS007	Three problems of large cities, all parts	--	38	59	66
2. Identifies sources most suitable to solve a particular problem or find particular information.					
RS008A	Spell a word/Dictionary	91	--	--	--
US008B	Unreleased	79	--	--	--
US008C	Unreleased	96	--	--	--
RS008D	History of Mexico/Encyclopedia	76	--	--	--
RS009A	Early settlement of state/Dictionary	68	--	--	--
RS009B	Early settlement of state/Encyclopedia	80	--	--	--
US009C	Early settlement of state/Unreleased	74	--	--	--
US009D	Early settlement of state/Unreleased	82	--	--	--
US010	Geographic information/Unreleased	59	--	--	--
RS011	Lincoln's birth/Encyclopedia	68	--	--	--

TABLE 2--*Continued*

Exercise #	Exercise Description	Nat'l Level of Acceptable Performance (Percent)			
		Age 9	Age 13	Age 17	Adult
USO12	Mississippi River/Unreleased	76	--	--	--
RSO13	Information about arrowhead artifact	79	--	--	--
USO14A	Event occurring in the last 24 hours/Unreleased	81	94	--	--
USO14B	Event occurring in the last 24 hours/Unreleased	79	86	--	--
RSO14C	Event occurring in the last 24 hours/Newspaper	87	98	--	--
RSO14D	Event occurring in the last 24 hours/Encyclopedia	89	98	--	--
RSO14E	Event occurring in the last 24 hours/TV	94	99	--	--
USO14F	Event occurring in the last 24 hours/Unreleased	93	98	--	--
USO15	Unreleased	--	32	52	--
USO16	Unreleased	--	28	48	47
RSO17	Immigration/Census	--	89	94	97
RSO06A	Evaluating politicians/Where to get information	--	42	62	69
RSO18	Which smoking study read?	--	65	77	79
	3. Uses standard reference sources and aids to locate information.				
	<u>Translates information found in table of contents.</u>				
RSO19A	Firemen in city	36	--	--	--
USO19B	Unreleased	67	--	--	--
USO19C	Unreleased	79	--	--	--
RSO19D	Horses	73	--	--	--
	<u>Translates information found in book index.</u>				
RSO20A	Sabotage	--	82	--	--
USO20B	Unreleased	--	83	--	--
RSO22A	Index, all three parts	--	45	70	67
	<u>Reads book index effectively.</u>				
USO22B	Unreleased, both parts	--	52	72	69

TABLE 2--*Continued*

Exercise #	Exercise Description	Nat'l Level of Acceptable Performance (Percent) Age 9	Age 13	Age 17	Adult
	Translates information found on catalogue card.				
RSO21	Lincoln book	--	78	--	--
	B. Interpreting information				
	1. Uses basic problem solving techniques of the social sciences (e.g., identifying and defining problems and issues; distinguishing facts from opinion, relevant from irrelevant information, or reliable from unreliable sources; detects logical errors, unstated assumptions, unwarranted assertions) to interpret information of various kinds.				
	Recognize when generalizations lack supporting evidence.				
RSI01	Who is smarter?	64	--	--	--
RSI06	Not enough to eat in India	70	--	--	--
USI07	Unreleased	66	--	--	--
USI08	Unreleased	47	--	--	--
	Recognize simple logical errors.				
USI05	Unreleased	71	--	--	--
	Recognize generalizations that go beyond the information given.				
USI20A	Declaration of Independence/Unreleased	--	93	95	96
USI20B	Declaration of Independence/Unreleased	--	69	67	64
RSI20C	Declaration of Independence/Inalienable rights	--	75	80	78
RSI20D	Declaration of Independence/Right to govern from people	--	80	90	94

TABLE 2--*Continued*

Exercise #	Exercise Description	Nat'l Level of Acceptable Performance (Percent)			
		Age 9	Age 13	Age 17	Adult
	Distinguish fact from opinion.				
USI09	Unreleased	--	74	85	74
USI14	Unreleased	--	79	93	91
	Distinguish relevant from irrelevant information.				
USI02	Unreleased	67	--	--	--
USI03	Unreleased	74	--	--	--
RSI04	Which sentence is true?	68	--	--	--
	Distinguish reliable from unreliable sources.				
RSI16	Most precise statement in research study	--	--	31	39
	Distinguish between objective and personalized explanations of events.				
RSI13	Which speaker?	--	78	91	89
	Identify unstated assumptions in an argument.				
USI10	Unreleased	--	81	87	80
RSI11	Which is logical conclusion?	--	60	81	76
USI12	Unreleased	--	57	80	80
USI15	Unreleased	--	54	70	72
	Identify and define problems and issues.				
RSI18	Speakers, war in Vietnam	--	--	75	79
USI19	Unreleased	--	--	36	50

TABLE 2--*Continued*

Exercise #	Exercise Description	Nat'l Level of Acceptable Performance (Percent) Age 9	Age 13	Age 17	Adult
	Aware that some things can be proved and some things cannot be proved.				
USI17B	Unreleased	76	96	98	95
RSI17C	Are Mexicans nicer than Canadians?	53	71	79	72
RSI17D	Is one religion better?	57	80	87	82
USI17E	Unreleased	92	95	97	97
2.	Interprets graphs and maps effectively.				
	Reads graphs correctly.				
USI22	Bar graph/Unreleased	--	76	88	76
RSI23	Line graph/Highest average price of apples	--	89	96	91
	Reads and interprets graphs, maps and tables correctly.				
RSI21	Bar graph/Money to improve roads	--	44	67	54
USI24	Line graph/Unreleased	--	53	74	69
RSI25	Pictograph/Comparing the US and USSR	--	24	42	54
RSI26	Outline map and table/Latitude and longitude--place location	--	24	34	34
USI27	Outline map and table/Unreleased	--	23	37	33
3.	Uses a variety of non-traditional sources of information.				
RSI28	Perceives social implication in pictorial art/Mother and Child	81	95	97	97
USI29	Perceives social implication in illustration and poem/Unreleased	48	77	92	91
USI30	Historical poem/Unreleased	--	79	88	89
RSI31	Political cartoon/Rich City	--	83	88	91
RSI32	Recording/Walk a Mile	--	33	43	--
RSI33	Recording/Carefully Taught	--	22	39	39

percentages dropped sharply when they were asked to interpret the information contained in the graphs, maps and tables. Just over half (53%) could read and interpret a line graph (USI24); only 24% of the 13-year-olds could read and interpret a pictograph (RSI25). Percentages of success for map and table exercises were even lower.

Age comparisons at a glance

Readers can quickly compare the national results for exercises administered at more than one age level by reading horizontally across the chart (Table 2). For example, one pattern that emerges in the subtopic of graph and map interpreting skills (B 2) is that 17-year-olds appear to be more apt at these skills than adults. Perhaps these are in-school skills, which adults tend quickly to forget. A comparison of overlap results on certain graph and map exercises deserve special note. On two exercises (USI22, RSI23) measuring the ability to literally read graphs, 13-year-olds and adults performed at about the same level, although neither age level performed as well as 17-year-olds. However, when the dimension of interpretation is added to graph reading (Exercises RSI21, USI24), the 13-year-olds performed well below adults. Seventeen-year-olds still performed best. On another exercise (RSI25) where respondents were asked to interpret the information provided on a pictograph, adult performance levels were higher than those of either 13 or 17-year-olds.

17-year-old performance generally best on four age overlaps

In general, the pattern reflected the results of the six skill exercises that were administered at ages 9, 13, 17 and adult is that 17-year-olds are most succesful on these exercises, although 13-year-olds and young adults did not perform appreciably below the 17-year-olds. It would appear, however, that 9-year-olds have not developed these skills to the degree that 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds and young adults have.

17-year-olds best of three ages in problem solving skills

The use of basic problem solving techniques of the social sciences (B 1) is measured by 15 skill exercises at ages 13, 17 and young adult. Seventeen-year-olds tended to perform slightly better than adults on these exercises. Thirteen-year-olds typically do less well than either 17-year-olds or adults. On three exercises (RSI11, USI12, USI15) measuring the ability to identify unstated assumptions in an argument, 13-year-old performance levels were appreciably below either 17-year-old or adult levels. They apparently have not mastered these skills to the degree the older respondents have.

Overall Group Performance

Exhibits 1-5 explained

Exhibits 1-5 graphically display the typical skill performance patterns for each National Assessment group at ages 9, 13, 17 and young adult. Each bar represents the middle 50% of the group's exercise differences as explained in Exhibit A (page 8). By comparing the median difference and the middle 50% of exercise differences of a group to the national level of performance, we can ascertain how well each group performed. By looking at the differences within a particular group at all four age levels, we can see if relative performance tended to vary with age.

At age 9, 43 skill exercises were administered, so a bar represents those 21 exercise differences that comprise the middle 50% of the entire range of 43 differences. At age 13, 51 exercises were administered. In this case, each bar represents the middle 25 exercise differences for a group. At age 17, 41 exercises were administered, so each bar represents the middle 21 exercise differences. Adults took 39 exercises; therefore, a bar represents the middle 19 exercise differences for a group. The darkened horizontal line crossing each bar is the median difference for that group. The positive and negative numbers along the vertical axis represent differences (in percentage points) from the national performance level.

Performance by Region

Southeast below nation

In general, southeasterners performed below national performance levels at all four ages (Exhibit 1). The median difference for ages 9 and 17 was approximately -3%; 13-year-olds and adults had a median difference of about -4%.

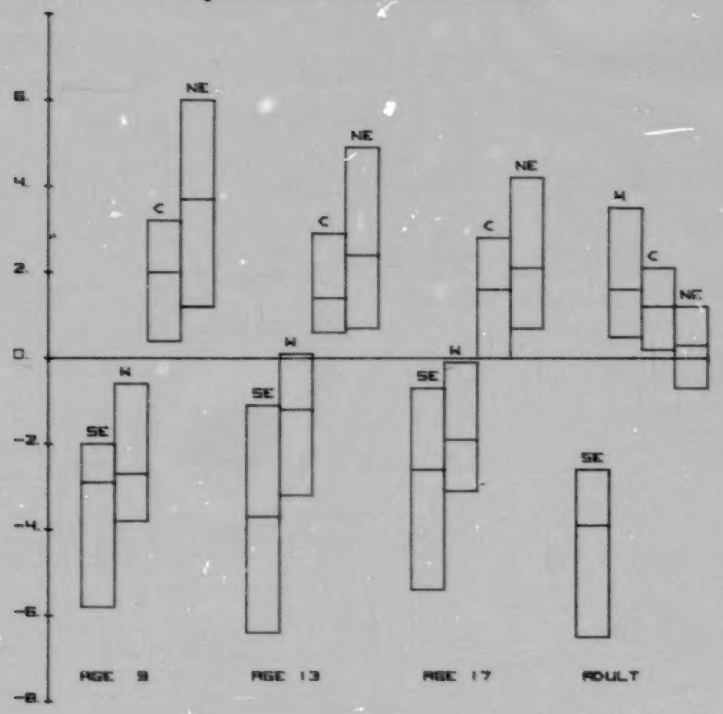
Western results variable

The performance pattern for the West is more variable. The median difference through age 17 is 1 to 3 percentage points below the national levels; however, young adults from the West did considerably better. The median difference for this group was about 2% above the national level of performance.

Central slightly above nation

The Central region's performance on those exercises was the most stable of all the regional groups. The median difference was between 1 and 2 percentage points above the national levels at all ages.

EXHIBIT 1. Skill Performance: Regional Results Compared to National Results



SE - Southeast
W - West
C - Central
NE - Northeast
□ - National level of performance
— - Median difference

Northeast above nation

The results for the Northeast were generally above the national percentage of success. However, the median difference continually comes closer to national levels as one moves from age 9 through young adult. Northeastern 9-year-olds had a median difference approximately 4% above the performance level of 9-year-olds generally. By age 13, this difference is slightly above 2%, by young adult, it is less than 1%.

Male-Female Performance

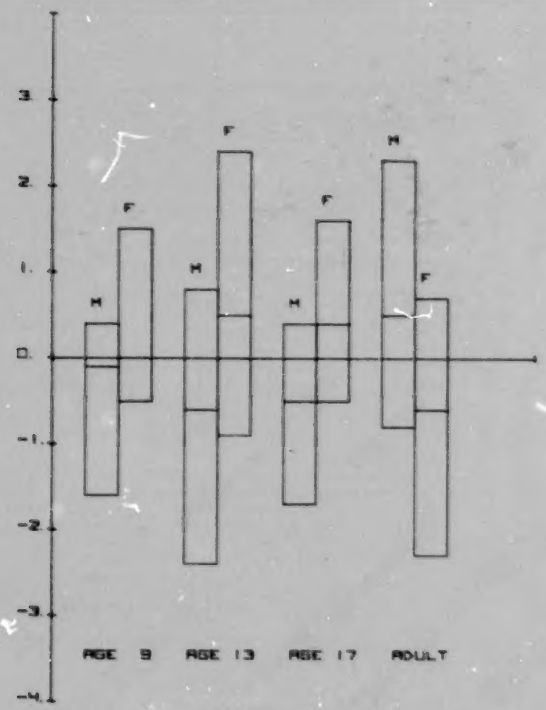
Females better than males at 9,

As Exhibit 2 indicates, females tend to perform slightly better than males through the high school

13, 17; below males at adult level

years. Among young adults a reversal occurs. Males perform slightly above the nation and females perform slightly below national levels.

EXHIBIT 2. Skill Performance: Male-Female Results Compared to National Results



□ - National level of performance
— - Median difference

Black-White Performance

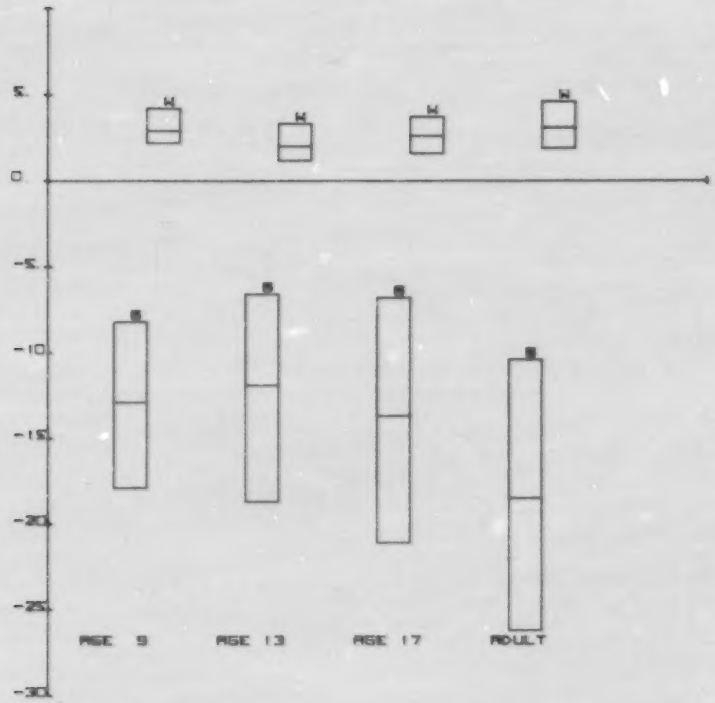
Blacks consistently below nation

Exhibit 3 indicates a large disparity between the performance levels of Blacks and Whites. White performance is consistently above the nation on these exercises; Black performance is consistently below national levels of success. The White advantage tends to increase as one moves from age 13 to young adult; for Blacks the disadvantage tends to become greater.

Performance by Level of Parental Education

At all age levels, respondents with at least one parent having more than a high school education performed above the nation.

EXHIBIT 3. Skill Performance: Black-White Results Compared to National Results



□ - National level of performance
— - Median difference

Parental education important indicator of performance

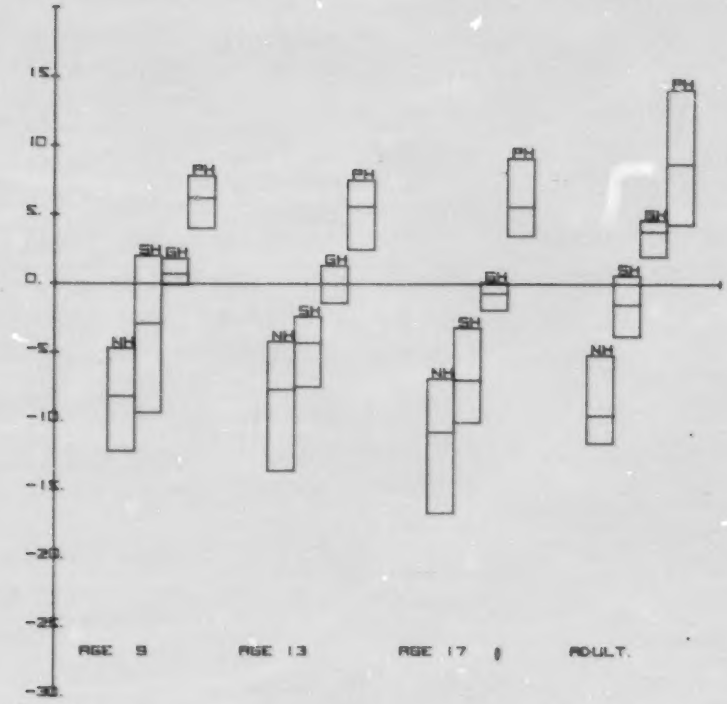
The median difference ranged from approximately 6% above the nation at age 9 to almost 9% above the nation at adult (Exhibit 4). Those whose parents had no high school displayed a notable disadvantage, performing well below the national levels. Among those respondents who indicated that the highest level of education for either parent was some high school, the disadvantage was still relatively great. The median difference was below national levels at all ages.

Performance by Size and Type of Community

Low and high metro respondents represent extremes of community performance

Two groups stand out in the category size and type of community (Exhibit 5) as representing the extremes of performance. The low metro group does considerably worse than the nation at all four ages, with a median difference ranging from 7% below the nation at age 17, to about 14% below the national populations at ages 9

EXHIBIT 4. Skill Performance: Parental Education Results Compared to National Results

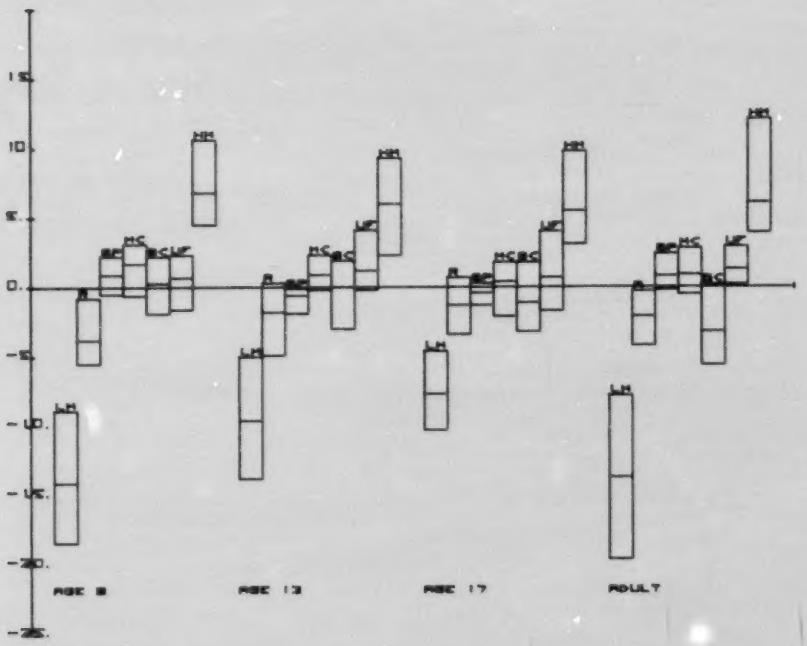


NHS - No high school
SHS - Some high school
GHS - Graduated high school
PHS - Post high school
□ - National level of performance
— - Median difference

and young adult. High metro respondents exhibit a consistent advantage at all four ages. Among the other groups the differences are less extreme, but generally maintain a pattern. For example, the median difference for rural respondents is about 1-4% below the nation at all ages. Respondents from medium cities and the urban fringe generally perform slightly above the national populations at all four age levels, while those classified as from small places shift from having a median difference slightly above the nation at age 9 to one that is slightly below at ages 13 and 17. By adult this difference is once more above the national level. The main big city respondents tend to show an increasing disadvantage (relative to the nation) with age. The median difference for this group ranges

from 1% above the nation at age 9 to about 4% below the nation at the adult level.

EXHIBIT 5. Skill Performance: Size and Type of Community Results Compared to National Results



LM - Low metro
R - Extreme rural
SP - Small places
MC - Medium city
BC - Main big city
UF - Urban fringe
HM - High metro
□ - National level of performance
— - Median difference

Patterns of Group Performance

Explanation of reporting procedure

By rank ordering the results on all exercises for each group from the highest to the lowest difference in percent from national performance levels, we can isolate patterns of achievement and begin to analyze the relative strengths and weaknesses of the various National Assessment groups. Results have been analyzed in varieties of ways. In some cases a group performed

above or below the national percentage of success on an exercise. In such cases results can be compared to the national results for that age level.[1] However, often it is equally informative to look at the results of an exercise only in relation to the rest of the results for the group. In such cases, the results may be above, below, or the same as the national results, but relative to the other results of the group, it may mean something quite different. Analyzing exercise results in this way is particularly important in cases where a group has a tendency to perform consistently above or below the nation. For example, the low metro group almost always performs below the nation. Yet within the group itself certain patterns often stand out and, therefore, may be important. In some cases group performance in a topic stands out relative to their usual performance on all skill exercises. If this occurred, the deviations are noted.

Nine-Year-Olds

Forty-three exercises included in the skills area were administered to 9-year-olds. The breakdown of exercises by topic and subtopic can be found in Table 1 on page 10.

Southeast 9s poorest in interpreting skills

Relative to their performance on all skill exercises, Southeastern 9-year-olds performed most poorly on exercises requiring interpreting skills.

Northeast 9s best in identifying sources of information

Northeastern 9-year-olds did particularly well on the exercises involving the identification of information sources, performing above the national levels on 14 of the 18 exercises requiring those skills.

Black 9s best in non-academic

Although Black 9-year-olds performed below the national level of success on 42 of the 43 exercises administered to 9-year-olds in this skills area, some interesting patterns emerge when one looks at the exercises on which they did relatively well or poorly.

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[1]In the section on patterns of group performance, only those exercise differences which would vary from the national percentage at the .05 level of significance will be discussed. Therefore, we can be sure that the variations we describe as above or below the national level have not occurred by chance.

skills--poorest in traditional school skills

Black 9-year-olds performed better than usual on seven exercises in the topic obtaining information, and of these, six deal with information gathering that is traditionally non-academic in nature.

Low metro 9s poorest in academic skills

Although low metro 9-year-olds performed below the nation on almost all of the skill exercises, it is interesting to note those on which results were particularly poor relative to their usual performance. On nine exercises their scores were from 20 to 30 percentage points below the national results. Seven of these exercises involve familiarity with information sources to which the poor do not generally have easy access. Among the items they did not properly identify were books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, maps and globes. Among the exercises on which they did best were three involving more popularized information sources such as the radio, television and newspapers.

Thirteen-Year-Olds

Fifty-one exercises in the skills area were administered to 13-year-olds (see Table 2).

Southeast 13s below nation in reference skills

On all five exercises measuring the ability to use standard reference sources and aids, Southeastern 13-year-old performance was below national performance levels.

Male 13s below females in library skills

A comparison of the results for males and females points to one clear pattern of difference. Males scored considerably lower than females on all the exercises involving the use of a book index or card catalogue.

Low metro 13s below nation in map and graph skills

Thirteen-year-olds living in communities categorized as low metro performed below national levels on three out of every four exercises. Results for the seven exercises involving reading and interpreting graphs and maps were all below the national levels.

Seventeen-Year-Olds

Forty-one skill area exercises were administered to 17-year-olds. Three fourths of these were in the topic interpreting information; only 10 were categorized in the topic obtaining information (see Table 2).

Male 17s above females in some map and graph skills

Seventeen-year-old males performed better than females on four out of seven exercises involving map and graph reading skills. Two involved reading and interpreting graphs. On Exercise RSI21, a bar graph interpretation, almost 5 percentage points separated their performance. The results on a pictograph, RSI25, were even more disparate. Forty-seven percent of the males answered correctly compared to 37% of the females. On two very similar exercises involving the use of an outline map and a table (RSI26, USI27) between 10-12 percentage points again separated the male-female results. Females did better on two exercises (RSI32 and RSI33) involving the interpretation of songs. Forty-eight percent of the females understood the main message in the song "Walk a Mile in My Shoes," compared to only 39% for males. Forty-five percent of the females understood "Carefully Taught," compared to 34% for 17-year-old males.

Black 17s poor in map, graph and reference skills

Among the exercises on which Blacks performed most poorly relative to their usual performance were those involving the interpretation of graphs, maps and tables. Percentages of success on these five exercises ranged anywhere from 20 to 36 points below the national levels for all 17-year-olds. On four exercises (USO15, USO16, RSO22A, USO22B) involving highly particularized reference sources that one would find in the library, differences from national percentages of success were also relatively great. On one involving a book index (RSO22A), performance levels were 30 points below the national levels. On an exercise involving a non-traditional source of information, *Mother and Child* (RSI28), which employed a touching picture, Blacks performed as well as all 17-year-olds. Ninety-seven percent gave acceptable responses to this question.

Adults

Thirty-nine exercises in the skills area were administered to young adults, ages 26-35. As was the case at age 17, most of these were in the topic interpreting information (see Table 2, page 11).

Male adults outperform females in map and graph skills

As at age 17, the greatest difference in the performance of males and females occurs within the subtopic of interpreting graphs, maps and tables. Male performance was better than that of females on all seven of these exercises. On one exercise, RSI26, 19 percentage points separate their performance levels. In this exercise involving both the use of a map and table, the

males answered correctly 44% of the time; only 25% of the females, on the other hand, could do as well.

Black adults poor in map and graph skills

Relative to their usual performance, Black adults did most poorly on exercises involving map, graph and table interpretation. The percentage of difference ranged from 25 to 40 percentage points below the national performance levels for all adults. Black adults also performed particularly poorly on two exercises (RSO22A, USO22B) involving the use of a book index. On both of these, performance levels were 32 percentage points below the national levels.

Exercises requiring ability to distinguish between fact and opinion yield confusing results

Results on a set of four exercises involving an awareness of what is provable were quite mixed for a number of groups, and it appears content may have unduly influenced the outcomes. Two of these exercises (USI17B and USI17E) had neutral content, but the other two dealt with religion and national origin. On the question of whether one could prove one religion better, Black performance was 19 percentage points below the national levels (RSI17D). When asked if one could prove if Mexicans were nicer than Canadians, the difference for Black adults was 26 percentage points below the national level. These same patterns occurred for Southeastern adults as well. Extreme rural adults performed below the national levels on three out of four of these exercises (RSI17D, USI17B, USI17E); however, on the one involving nationality differences, (RSI17C, *Are Mexicans Nicer than Canadians?*), they performed at the national level. Although adults from small places performed as well as all adults on three out of four of these exercises, they were below national levels on the question involving national differences. These exercises point to the problem of separating a skill from the subject matter of an exercise.

CHAPTER 3

KNOWLEDGE

Traditionally the goals of social studies education have been linked to civics and some simpler aspects of history and geography. However, the legitimate range of topics in the social studies is no longer so clearly defined. Economics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, philosophy and political science have now joined history, geography and civics as part of the curriculum. "Mini" and "maxi" courses concentrating on specific concerns and interests of students have become increasingly popular across the country. Names, dates and facts are no longer "sacred cows" to be carefully transferred in some magic pedagogical process from textbooks to students' minds. The emphasis is shifting from covering the whole field and memorizing the important facts, to learning how to use varieties of information to make decisions and better understand the processes of change.

While most Americans would agree that the social studies includes an intelligent understanding of social conditions, problems and processes, beyond this vague concensus it is difficult to get much agreement on just what young Americans should know. However, National Assessment has made every effort to establish a broad representational base with the four knowledge area topics in the Social Studies assessment. These include: economics, geography, history and political science. Because each of these topics could easily be subject of an assessment in itself, it would be presumptious to think we have fully covered these fields. We have, however, provided useful data within all of them.

Four topics: economics, geography, history, political science

As in other areas explored by the National Assessment of the Social Studies, not all exercises were administered at all age levels. Table 3 indicates the number of knowledge exercises administered at each age level by area, topic and subtopic. Often an exercise is categorized within more than one topic because it is interdisciplinary in nature. In these cases, it maintains the exercise identifier of its first

placement. For example in Table 4 in the topic geography, the reader suddenly comes upon Exercise RS001, *Man from Peru*. This exercise also is found in the skills area within the topic obtaining information. Often geography and economics exercises are also classified in the topic history. Sixteen knowledge area exercises were administered at ages 9, 13, 17 and adult. As might be expected, the performance level of 9-year-olds was generally well below that of the other ages. Results at ages 13, 17 and young adult were varied. However, the difference between adult and 17-year-old performance was generally negligible.

TABLE 3. Number of Knowledge Exercises by Area, Topic and Subtopic

	Age Level			
	9	13	17	Adult
II. Knowledge/general area	48*	70	84	83
A. Knowledge/economics	4	14	18	18
1. Understands some of the basic characteristics of economic systems that are common to all modern industrial societies				
B. Knowledge/geography	20	11	12	12
1. Has knowledge of worldwide spatial distribution and interrelationship of the major features of man's physical and cultural environment				
C. Knowledge/history	20	36	42	42
1. Understands some of the major developments in United States history	9	15	17	17
2. Understands some of the major developments in world history	11	21	25	25
D. Knowledge/political science	5	21	27	26
1. Know some of the individuals and groups responsible for making government decisions	3	11	11	11
2. Understands some of the rights and responsibilities granted in the Constitution	0	5	6	5
3. Know something of the election process and the role of political parties	0	4	9	9
4. Understands some of the processes involved in political socialization	2	1	1	1

*The total number of knowledge area exercises will be smaller than the number of exercises one arrives at by adding the totals for individual knowledge topics. This is due to the fact that exercises occasionally occur in more than one topic. For example, an exercise may occur both in geography and economics. This is counted at the topic level in both cases, but only once for the overall area.

TABLE 4. Complete Listing of Knowledge Area Exercises

Exercise #	Exercise Description	Nat'l Level of Acceptable Performance (Percent)			
		Age 9	Age 13	Age 17	Adult
A.	Economics				
	1. Understands some of the basic characteristics of economic systems that are common to all industrial societies.				
RKE01	Recognition of sales tax	83	--	--	--
RKE02	The relation of wages to prices	44	--	--	--
UKE03	Retail profit/Unreleased	49	--	--	--
RKE04	Understanding credit purchases	89	--	--	--
UKE05	Government role in the economic process/Unreleased	--	47	58	75
UKE06	Production of goods and services/Unreleased	--	65	81	77
RKE07	Difference between producer and consumer goods	--	57	81	79
UKE08	Utilization of disposable income/Unreleased	--	80	87	93
UKE09A	Industrial society/Unreleased	--	66	60	52
RKE09B	Industrial society/Individual craftsmanship	--	41	66	53
RKE09C	Industrial society/Rural to urban	--	67	78	83
UKE09D	Industrial society/Unreleased	--	20	30	28
UKE10	Industrial society/Unreleased	--	27	55	50
UKE11	Goods and services/Unreleased	--	--	26	28
RKE12	The meaning of monopoly	--	--	51	56
RKE13	The market system/Farm prices seek their own level	--	--	21	30
RKE14	The purpose of the Common Market	--	22	45	55
RKE15A	US and USSR similarities and differences/Natural resources	--	54	72	72
UKE15B	US and USSR similarities and differences/Unreleased	--	35	60	72
UKE15C	US and USSR similarities and differences/Unreleased	--	34	22	21
RKE15D	US and USSR similarities and differences/Government ownership and control	--	54	79	72
RKE16	Big business' effect on foreign nation	--	--	52	52

TABLE 4--*Continued*

Exercise #	Exercise Description	Nat'l Level of Acceptable Performance (Percent)			
		Age 9	Age 13	Age 17	Adult
B. Geography					
	1. Has knowledge of worldwide spatial distribution and interrelationship of the major features of man's physical and cultural environment.				
RKG01	Location of Great Lakes	51	--	--	--
RKG02A	Location of major river/Amazon	57	--	--	--
RKG02B	Location of major river/Mississippi	80	--	--	--
UKG02C	Location of major river/Unreleased	61	--	--	--
RKG02D	Location of major river/Ohio	68	--	--	--
UKG02E	Location of major river/Unreleased	61	--	--	--
UKG03	Location of major city/Unreleased	72	--	--	--
RKG04	State bordering Pacific Ocean/California	43	--	--	--
RKG05	State bordering Atlantic Ocean/New York	37	--	--	--
UKG06	Regional location of a state/Unreleased	37	--	--	--
UKG07	Regional location of a state/Unreleased	40	--	--	--
RSO01	Man from Peru	70	--	--	--
USO04	Shows interest in people with cultural differences/Ceylon pen pal	67	82	--	--
USO02	Shows interest in people with cultural differences/Girl traveler	79	--	--	--
RKG08	Importance of water routes/Columbus	24	71	--	--
RKG09	Latitude and longitude/Climate	--	30	34	22
USI27	Outline map and table/Unreleased	--	23	37	33
RSI26	Latitude and longitude/Place location	--	24	34	34
RKE15A	US and USSR similarities and differences/Natural resources	--	54	72	72
RKG10	Geographic determinism/Camel use on desert	89	--	--	--
UKG11	Geographic determinism/Unreleased	81	--	--	--
UKG12	Climate/Unreleased	22	54	--	--
UKG13	Language/Unreleased	--	58	78	66
RKG14	Map of rainfall zones	--	53	60	47
RKG15	Population determinant/Low birth and death rates	--	--	19	30
UKG16	Social status determinant/Unreleased	--	--	44	45

TABLE 4--*Continued*

Exercise #	Exercise Description	Nat'l Level of Acceptable Performance (Percent)			
		Age 9	Age 13	Age 17	Adult
RKG17	Adaption to desert life	40	60	71	77
RKG18	Effects of environmental modification/Highway construction	47	75	82	85
UKG19	Interrelationship of cultural and physical environment/Unreleased	--	--	46	39
RKG20	Interrelationship of cultural and physical environment/Tribalism and nationalism in Africa	--	--	30	37

C. History

1. Understands some of the major developments in United States history.

RKH01	Greatest influence on US/England	40	67	79	77
UKH02	Major US holiday/Unreleased	94	--	--	--
UKH03	Major US holiday/Unreleased	69	--	--	--
UKH04	American Revolution/Unreleased	--	46	--	--
RKH05	American Revolution/Independence from England	45	--	--	--
RKH06	American Revolution/One reason	--	50	64	49
USI20A	Declaration of Independence/Unreleased	--	93	95	96
USI20B	Declaration of Independence/Unreleased	--	69	67	64
RSI20C	Declaration of Independence/Inalienable rights	--	75	80	78
RSI20D	Declaration of Independence/Right to govern from people	--	80	90	94
RKH07	Declaration of Independence/Main purpose	--	77	85	79
RKH08	First president of the US	83	--	--	--
UKH09	Famous president/Unreleased	--	61	82	76
UKE10	Industrial society/Unreleased	--	27	55	50
RKH10	Direct cause of WWII/Pearl Harbor	--	--	89	87
UKH11	The regulation of big business/Unreleased	--	--	39	36
UKH12	Civil rights/Unreleased	--	--	32	49
RSO07	Three problems of large cities	--	38	59	66
RKH13A	Minority roles in the history and culture of America/American Indians, at least 2 names	6	18	35	41

TABLE 4--*Continued*

Exercise #	Exercise Description	Nat'l Level of Acceptable Performance (Percent)			
		Age 9	Age 13	Age 17	Adult
RKH13B	Minority roles in the history and culture of America/Black Americans, at least 3 names	8	34	64	73
RKH13C	Minority roles in the history and culture of America/Oriental Americans, at least 2 names	0	0	1	4
RKH13D	Minority roles in the history and culture of America/Spanish-speaking Americans, at least 2 names	1	3	7	20
	2. Understands some of the major developments in world history.				
RKG08	Importance of water routes/Columbus	24	71	--	--
UKH14A	Sense of historical time/Unreleased	58	63	55	63
UKH14B	Sense of historical time/Unreleased	91	98	99	98
RKH14C	Sense of historical time/Printing press	49	57	54	61
RKH14D	Sense of historical time/Travel 50 mph	83	87	85	91
RKH15A	Sense of historical time/Telegraph	79	97	98	96
UKH15B	Sense of historical time/Unreleased	20	35	46	39
RKH15C	Sense of historical time/Compass	63	75	75	66
UKH15D	Sense of historical time/Unreleased	86	96	96	93
UKH16	Greatest influence on culture of foreign country/Unreleased	40	65	85	81
UKE09A	Industrial society/Unreleased	--	66	60	52
RKE09B	Industrial society/Individual craftsmanship	--	41	66	53
RKE09C	Industrial society/Rural to urban	--	67	78	83
UKE09D	Industrial society/Unreleased	--	20	30	28
RKG15	Population determinant/Low birth and death rates	--	--	19	30
RKE15A	US and USSR similarities and differences/Natural resources	--	54	72	72
UKE15B	US and USSR similarities and differences/Unreleased	--	35	60	72
UKE15C	US and USSR similarities and differences/Unreleased	--	34	22	21
RKE15D	US and USSR similarities and differences/Government ownership and control	--	54	79	72
RKH17	Organization for world peace/UN	--	67	70	81
RKH18	Major goal of UN/Peace	47	77	92	89

TABLE 4--*Continued*

Exercise #	Exercise Description	Nat'l Level of Acceptable Performance (Percent)			
		Age 9	Age 13	Age 17	Adult
UKH19	Relationship of major powers/Unreleased	--	--	50	62
RKE14	Purpose of the Common Market	--	22	45	55
UKG19	Cultural effects on physical environment/Unreleased	--	--	46	39
RKG20	Cultural effects on physical environment/Tribalism and nationalism in Africa	--	--	30	37
RKE16	Big business' effect on foreign nation	--	--	52	52
	D. Political science				
	1. Knows some of the individuals and groups responsible for making government decisions.				
RKP01	The duties of the Health Department/Inspection	36	--	--	--
RKP02	Responsibility for a fair trial/Judge	74	--	--	--
RKP03	Head of town government/Mayor	58	--	--	--
RKP04	Academic most interested in government/Political scientist	--	50	72	74
UKP05	Cabinet position/Unreleased	--	39	67	66
UKP06	Foreign affairs/Unreleased	--	27	38	64
UKP07A	Government responsibility/Local	--	67	83	89
UKP07B	Government responsibility/State	--	47	65	70
UKP07C	Government responsibility/State	--	60	87	89
UKP07D	Government responsibility/Federal	--	83	94	96
RKP08A	Establish central branch of university/State	--	71	84	79
RKP08B	Raise mail rates/Federal	--	72	90	95
RKP08C	Lower tax on imports/Federal	--	73	89	92
RKP08D	Increase garbage collection/Local	--	77	92	92
	2. Understands some of the rights and responsibilities granted in the Constitution.				
RKP09	Statement of civil rights/Constitution	--	63	84	78

TABLE 4--*Continued*

Exercise #	Exercise Description	Nat'l Level of Acceptable Performance (Percent)			
		Age 9	Age 13	Age 17	Adult
UKP10	Basic constitutional rights/Unreleased	--	77	--	--
UKP12	International relations/Unreleased	--	26	49	46
RKP11	Supreme Court/Prayer in school decision	--	--	49	52
RKP13	Supreme Court/Power to declare act of Congress unconstitutional	--	35	71	62
UKP14	Supreme Court/Unreleased	--	--	9	--
UKP15	Supreme Court/Unreleased	--	30	56	66
	3. Knows something about the election process and the role of political parties.				
RKP16	Elected and appointed officials/Senators	--	74	89	90
RKP17	The nomination of presidential candidates/National Convention	--	17	49	60
RKP18A-E	Using a simple ballot/All five parts	--	--	41	44
RSO06A	Evaluating politicians/Where to get information	--	42	62	69
USO06B	Evaluating politicians/Raising appropriate questions	--	70	75	76
	4. Understands some of the processes involved in political socialization.				
RKP19	Cooperation in social situations	92	--	--	--
UKP20	Cooperation in school	97	--	--	--
RKP21	Why society has rules and regulations	--	67	84	69

Eighteen knowledge exercises were administered only to 17-year-olds and adults. For half of the exercises, the difference between adult and 17-year-old performance was minimal. One unreleased exercise, concerning the civil rights movement (UKH12) was interesting. Adults' performance was 17% higher than that of 17-year-olds. Forty-nine percent of the young adults performed acceptably on this exercise, compared to 32% of the 17-year-olds. Perhaps the civil rights movement was living history for the young adults who were in their twenties during the decade of the sixties; while for the 17-year-olds, who would have been generally too young to participate, the civil rights movement was simply one more historical event they read about in their American history texts.

On the knowledge area exercises administered to 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds and young adults, 17-year-olds and adults generally performed at a consistently higher level than the 13-year-olds. The differences between 17-year-old and adult performance levels were generally minimal, but in a few cases they are worthy of note. On two exercises, *Organization for World Peace* (RKH17) and *Purpose of the European Common Market* (RKE14), adult performance was at least 10 percentage points above that of the other ages. Both these questions deal with phenomena that arose out of World War II and Cold War experiences of the 1950s. Perhaps it is not surprising that adults had more knowledge in these areas. By the late 1960s our attention was focused primarily on Southeast Asia, and interest in Europe and the United Nations had waned considerably from the Cold War years. Seventeen-year-olds performed 14 percentage points better than either 13-year-olds or adults on a straight historical question about why the American colonies rebelled (RKH06). Although 64% of the 17-year-olds chose the correct answer, only 50% of the 13-year-olds and 49% of the adults could do so. Perhaps this, too, is not surprising, as most high school curricula require one year of American history which would still be fresh in the minds of 17-year-olds.

What 9-year-olds know

A review of the knowledge area exercise results at age 9 prompts some observations about the types of things 9-year-olds know in the topics of economics, geography, history and political science: (1) Economics--although more than 4 out of 5 9-year-olds had a rudimentary understanding of sales tax (RKE01) and buying on credit (RKE04), less than half understood more theoretical issues like the relationship between prices and wages (RKE02). (2) Geography--anywhere

from 40 to 80% of the 9-year-olds could establish the geographic location of a number of major landmarks like rivers, lakes, cities and states. Yet only 1 9-year-old in 4 (24%) knew that Columbus first sailed west in search of new water routes to the east (RKG08). (3) Only 4 out of 10 9-year-olds knew that England was the country that had the greatest influence on the United States (RKH01) or that the American Revolution was fought for independence from English rule (RKH05). Less than 1 out of 10 knew even the names of famous people from large American minority groups. Black Americans were best known; 8% of the 9-year-olds knew the names of at least three famous Blacks. (4) Although approximately three fourths of the 9-year-olds knew that a judge was responsible for a fair trial, only slightly more than one half (58%) identified the mayor as the head of a town government, while only 1 out of 3 knew what the duties of the Health Department included.

A number of exercise results at age 13 also bear mention. (1) Less than one fourth of the 13-year-olds knew the purpose of the Common Market (RKE14). About 1 out of 2 13-year-olds knew that both the United States and USSR were rich in natural resources (RKE15A) and that the organization of industry in the USSR is based on government ownership and control (RKE15D). (2) Given a latitude-longitude table, only 3 13-year-olds in 10 were able to figure out where it would be warmest. The question required some knowledge of the location of the equator and its relationship to temperature (RKG09). On another exercise using a similar table, only one fourth of the 13-year-olds answered correctly (RSI26). In this case the respondent had to know where the Pacific Ocean was located and read the latitude and longitude lines of an outline map as well. On one exercise using an outline map (RKG14), over one half (53%) of the 13-year-olds were able to pick out north Africa as an area having little rainfall on the whole. (3) Thirteen-year-olds took two exercises dealing with the American Revolution (UKH04, RKH06). In neither case did more than one half choose the correct answer. On a question dealing with city problems, less than 2 13-year-olds in 5 gave acceptable replies. (4) Only one third of the 13-year-olds knew that the Supreme Court had the power to declare an act of Congress unconstitutional and less than 1 out of 5 (17%) knew that presidential candidates are nominated at national conventions (RKP17).

Low performance levels at ages 9 and 13 may often surprise readers, but they can at least be partially explained by the knowledge that much schooling still lies ahead. However, by age 17 the formal schooling of most young Americans is coming to an end. Although many do go on to college, vocational or trade schools, their formal commitment to learning is completed or almost completed. Therefore, the level of 17-year-old achievement should perhaps be more seriously considered.

What 17-year-olds know

(1) Only one out of two 17-year-olds knew the meaning of the term monopoly (RKE14), or the ways in which big business can affect the internal affairs of foreign nations (RKE16). (2) Less than one fifth of the 17-year-olds knew some of the factors that determined whether a society had a low birth and death rate (RKG15), while under one third (30%) of this age group could give reasons why tribalism was often stronger than nationalism in Africa south of the Sahara. (3) About three 17-year-olds in five gave acceptable responses to a question about problems of big cities. Although almost two thirds of the 17-year-olds could name at least three famous Black Americans, only one out of three could name two famous American Indians and only a few could name famous Spanish-speaking or Oriental Americans at all. (4) About one half of the 17-year-olds knew the basis of the Supreme Court decision forbidding prayer in school (RKP11); however, almost three fourths of the respondents (71%) realized the Supreme Court could declare an act of Congress unconstitutional.

Two questions bearing on knowledge of the election process mention and should perhaps be cause for concern. Less than one half (49%) of the 17-year-olds realized that presidential candidates are nominated at national conventions (RKP17); even fewer (41%) understood all five parts of a simple ballot (RKP18A-E). Results for young adults on this exercise were not appreciably better. Only 44% of the young adults understood all parts of the ballot. Does this mean that less than one half of those who vote do so correctly? The thought is rather disconcerting.

A complete listing of the knowledge area exercises and the percentage of success at every age at which they were administered is presented in Table 4.

Overall Group Performance

Exhibits 6-10 explained

Exhibits 6-10 graphically display the typical knowledge performance patterns for each National Assessment group at ages 9, 13, 17 and young adult. Each bar represents the middle 50% of the group's exercise differences as explained in Exhibit A (page 8). By comparing the median difference and the middle 50% of exercise differences of a group to the national level of performance, we can ascertain how well each group performed in the knowledge area. By looking at the differences within a particular group at all four age levels, we can see if relative performance tended to vary with age.

At age 9, 48 knowledge exercises were administered, so a bar represents those 24 exercise differences that comprise the middle 50% of the entire range of 48 differences. At age 13, 70 exercises were administered. In this case, each bar represents the middle 36 exercise differences for a group. Eighty-four exercises were administered to 17-year-olds, so each bar represents the middle 42 exercise differences. Adults took 82 exercises; therefore, a bar represents the middle 42 exercise differences for a group. The darkened horizontal line crossing each bar is the median difference for that group. The positive and negative numbers along the vertical axis represent differences (in percentage points) from the national performance level.

Performance by Region

Southeast below nation at all ages

In general, southeasterners performed below the national levels at all four ages. Performance relative to the nation tended to become worse as southeasterners got older. The median exercise difference for Southeastern adults was approximately 5 percentage points below the national population as a whole (Exhibit 6).

Western results variable

Nine-year-olds, 13-year-olds and 17-year-olds from the Western region performed below national levels generally. However, the median exercise difference for the West was above the national level.

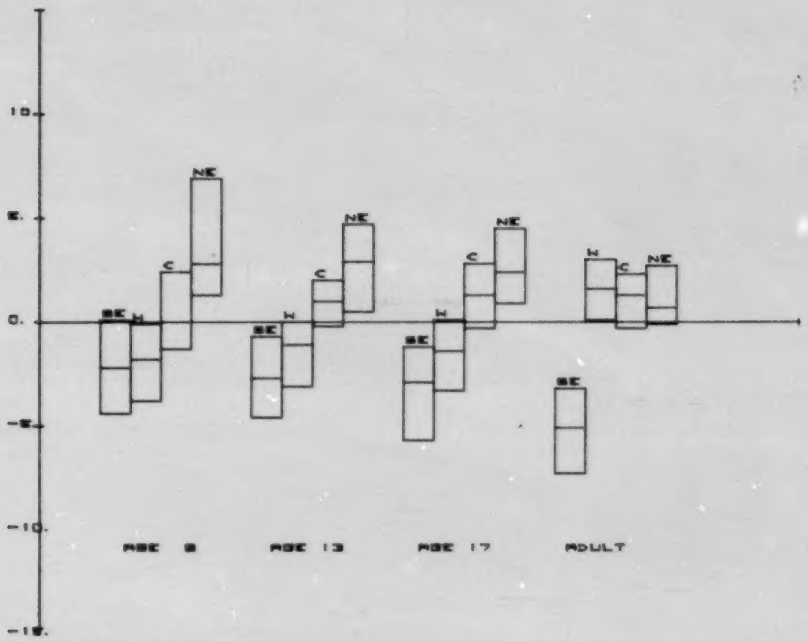
Central at national levels

Central 9-year-olds performed at about national levels; however, the 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds and adults performed slightly above the national performance levels.

Northeast above nation

The results for the Northeast were generally above national results. The median exercise difference at ages 9, 13 and 17 was approximately 3 percentage points above the national performance levels. The median exercise difference was only about 1 percentage point above the national level at young adult.

EXHIBIT 6. Knowledge Performance: Regional Results Compared to National Results



SE - Southeast
W - West
C - Central
NE - Northeast
□ - National level of performance
— - Median difference

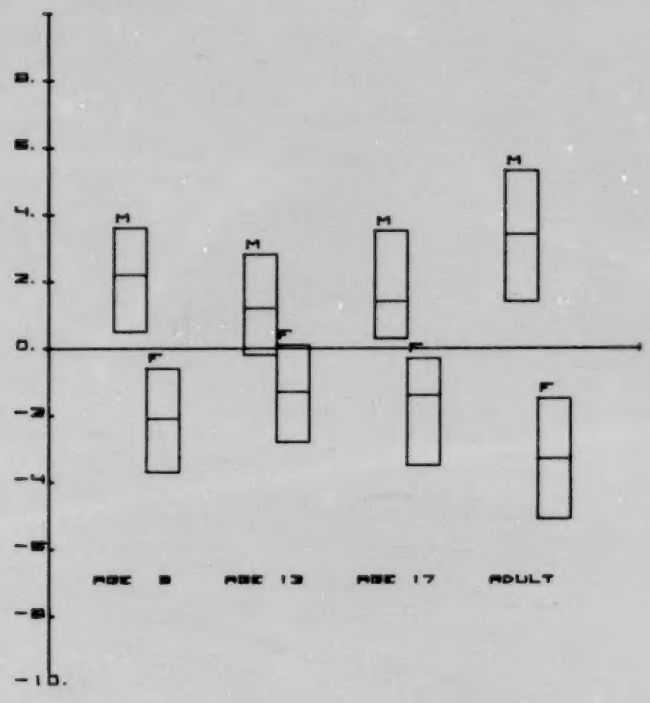
Male-Female Performance

Males outperform females

Exhibit 7 indicates that males perform better in knowledge exercises at all age levels. Female performance levels come closest to that of males at age 13

on these exercises; however, the pattern still remains clear. The greatest disparity between male and female performance occurs at the adult level.

EXHIBIT 7. Knowledge Performance: Male-Female Results Compared to National Results



□ - National level of performance
— - Median difference

Black-White Performance

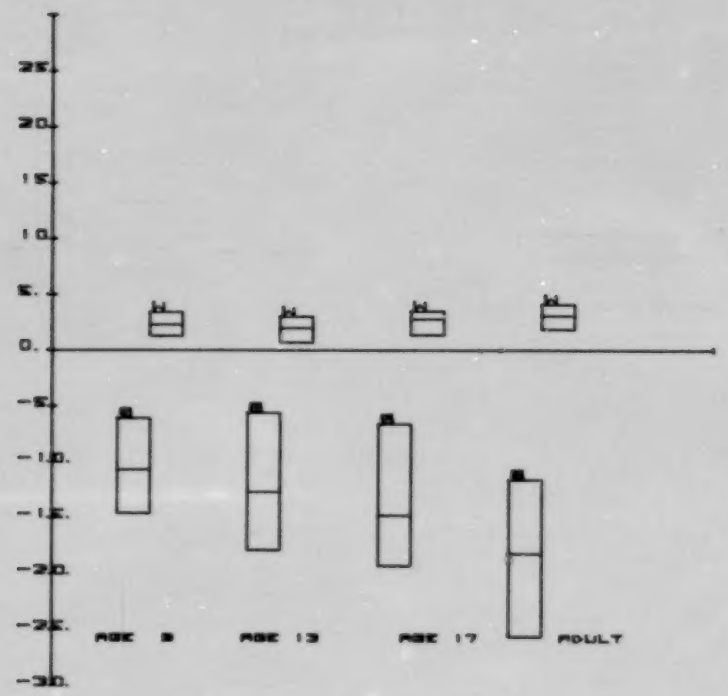
Blacks consistently below nation

Exhibit 8 indicates the large disparity between the performance levels of Blacks and Whites. White performance is consistently above the national levels of performance on these exercises; Black performance is consistently below the national levels. The White advantage increases slightly from age 13 through young adult.

Performance by Level of Parental Education

The median exercise difference for respondents at all four ages who indicated that at least one parent

EXHIBIT 8. Knowledge Performance: Black-White Results Compared to National Results



□ - National level of performance
— - Median difference

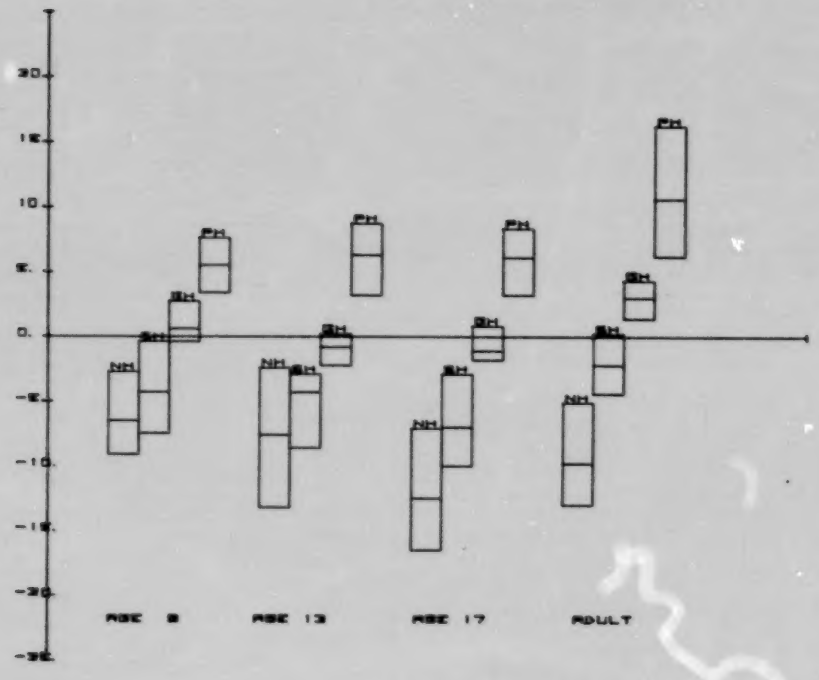
had more than a high school education was above the national level (Exhibit 9). The median differences for those indicating that neither parent went to high school was below the national level. The median difference for respondents indicating that the highest level of parental education was some high school was below the national level at all ages as well. Among 9-year-olds and adults indicating that either parent had graduated from high school, the median exercise difference was above the nation.

Performance by Size and Type of Community

Low and high metro extremes of community performance

Only two size and type of community groups performed appreciably above or below national levels consistently. The low metro group performed considerably below the national levels at all four age levels; the

EXHIBIT 9. Knowledge Performance: Parental Education Results Compared to National Results



NHS - No high school
SHS - Some high school
GHS - Graduated high school
PHS - Post high school
□ - National level of performance
— - Median difference

high metro group performed considerably above national levels. Among the other groups, those categorized as rural or main big city performed slightly below national levels at all ages, while the urban fringe was consistently at or slightly above national levels (Exhibit 10).

Patterns of Group Performance

Reporting procedure explained

Results for the knowledge exercises have been analyzed in a variety of ways. In some cases, the median exercise difference in each of the four topics and for the area as a whole provides information about the relative strengths and weaknesses of the various

National Assessment groups in the topics of economics, geography, history and political science. These data have been used to ascertain whether any patterns exist.

In other cases typical results may not prove noteworthy; however, the results for individual exercises may. In cases where a group performed above or below the national performance level on an individual exercise, or a number of exercises, these results are also reported, and potential patterns, if any, are discussed.[1]

Nine-Year-Olds

Forty-eight exercises included in the knowledge area were administered to 9-year-olds. The number of exercises in each topic and subtopic are listed in Table 3.

In general, Southeastern 9-year-olds scored below the national level of success in the knowledge area. On one geography exercise (UKG06) which involved identifying a southern state, performance was almost 8 percentage points above the national level. On another (RKG01) which involved the location of the Great Lakes, however, performance levels were almost 12 percentage points below the national level of all 9-year-olds. As with Southeastern 9-year-olds, Central 9-year-olds seemed to do well on geography exercises that dealt with familiar landmarks. For example, Central 9-year-olds scored 9 percentage points above the nation on the exercise dealing with the location of the Great Lakes (RKG01) and 6 points above the nation on another (RKG02D) which asked if the Ohio River was in the United States. Yet on the exercise involving the identification of a southern state, performance was below the national level.

Western 9-year-olds generally performed below the national population of 9-year-olds; however, on Exercise RKG04 which asked respondents to identify California as a state bordering on the Pacific Ocean, results were above the national level.

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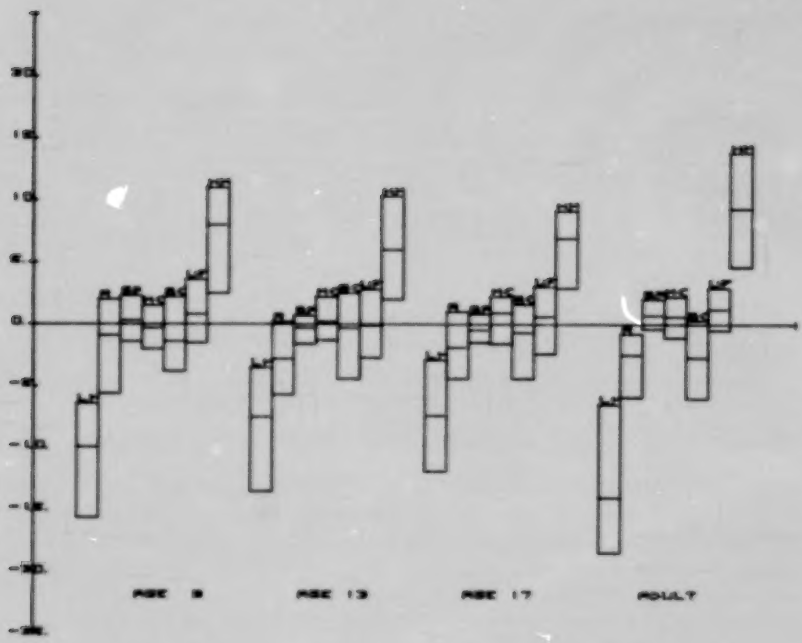
[1]Only those exercise differences which vary from the national percentage at the .05 level of significance will be discussed. Therefore, we can be relatively sure that the variations we describe as above or below the national level have not occurred by chance.

EXHIBIT 10. Knowledge Performance: Size and Type of Community Results Compared to National Results



LM - Low metro
R - Extreme rural
SP - Small places
MC - Medium city
BC - Main big city
UF - Urban fringe
HM - High metro
□ - National level of performance
— - Median difference

Whites low on Black history exercise

Although 9-year-old Whites performed above the national levels of success on seven out of every eight exercises, on one involving knowledge of the role of Blacks in the history and culture of America (RKH13B), results were below the nation as a whole.

Black 9s above nation in Black history exercise

Black 9-year-olds performed below the national level of all 9-year-olds on seven out of every eight exercises. Performance levels were above the national levels on two exercises. On the exercise involving knowledge of the role of Blacks in the history and culture of the United States, Black 9-year-olds performed 8 percentage points above the nation.

Thirteen-Year-Olds

Seventy exercises included in the knowledge area were administered to 13-year-olds. The number of exercises included in each topic and subtopic can be found in Table 3.

Southeast better on history than geography

Relative to their performance on all knowledge exercises, Southeastern 13-year-olds did best on history exercises and worst on geography exercises. Four exercises on which they did particularly poor relative to their usual performance involved some knowledge of current affairs. They involved issues such as the evaluation of politicians (RS006A, US006B), the problems of large cities (RS007) and the effect that highway construction might have on the physical and social environment of an area (RKG18). Results on these exercises were from 7 to 12 percentage points below the national performance levels of all 13-year-olds.

West worse on economics and geography than other knowledge topics

Relative to their performance on all knowledge exercises, Western 13-year-olds did most poorly on those involving economics and geography. One exercise on which they scored above national levels concerned the role of Indian Americans in our history and culture (RKH13A). However, on a similar question involving Black Americans, results were below those of 13-year-olds nationally.

Although Northeastern 13-year-olds generally performed above the nation in this area, they did particularly well on geography exercises.

Male 13s better than females in geography

Male performance was generally better than female performance in the knowledge area. This is particularly true for geography questions.

Blacks below nation but best knowledge topic is history; Blacks know Black history better than Whites

Although Blacks performed well below the national population of all 13-year-olds in general, they did relatively well on the history exercises. On the exercise involving knowledge of the role of Black Americans in the history and culture of our nation, Black 13-year-olds performed 11 percentage points above the national level. Geography and political science exercises proved most difficult for them.

Seventeen-Year-Olds

Eighty-four exercises included in the knowledge area were administered to 17-year-olds. The number of

these included in each topic and subtopic can be found in Table 3.

Relative to their usual performance, Southeastern 17-year-olds performed most poorly on economics and geography items.

Seventeen-year-olds from the western states were above the national level of all 17-year-olds on two exercises dealing with the role of minority groups in American history and culture. A greater percentage of Western 17-year-olds were able to name at least two famous Indian Americans (RKH13A) and Spanish-speaking Americans (RKH13D) than 17-year-olds nationally.

Male 17s outperform females in geography

Seventeen-year-old males generally did better than their female counterparts in the knowledge area. This was particularly true on geography items. For example, on one exercise involving the use of latitude and longitude tables and some understanding of the relationship of the equator to climatic conditions (RKG09), 45% of the males--compared to 23% of the females at this age--responded correctly. On another exercise involving a map of rainfall zones (RKG14), 66% of the males--compared to 54% of the females--responded correctly.

Black 17s above nation in Black history

Although White 17-year-olds generally performed well above the national level of all 17-year-olds on two exercises involving knowledge of the roles of Spanish-speaking (RKH13D) and Black Americans (RKH13B) in our history and culture, results were below the national levels of performance. Blacks, usually well below the national performance levels, performed particularly well on the exercise involving the role of Blacks in our history and culture. Results on this exercise were 16 percentage points above the national level. This difference takes on added meaning when it is considered in relation to the median difference (15 percentage points below the national level) for Blacks on all knowledge exercises.

Black performance very low on electoral process items

In a group of exercises involving the use of an election ballot (RKP18A-E), Black performance was 26 percentage points below the national results for those 17-year-olds able to use all parts correctly. On another exercise involving knowledge of the formal nominating procedure for presidential candidates (RKP17), Black performance was 27 points below all 17-year-olds. On these same exercises, those 17-year-olds indicating that neither parent had a high school

education or that at least one parent had some high school education also scored well below the national levels and quite poorly relative to their usual performance.

Low metro low on knowledge of electoral process

Relative to their performance on all knowledge exercises, low metro 17-year-olds perform best on history items and worst on geography items. Among the exercises on which they did most poorly were those involving knowledge of the election process. On the exercises involving a simple ballot, results were 16 points below the national level. For the exercise on presidential nominations the difference from the nation was even greater--19 percentage points. On another exercise involving knowledge of the way to find out information about a political candidate in order to make an evaluation (RS006A), low metro 17-year-olds performed 15 points below the level of 17-year-olds nationally.

Adults

Eighty-three knowledge area exercises were administered to young adults. The number of these included in each topic and subtopic can be found in Table 3.

Western adults do well on history and culture of Spanish-speaking Americans

Relative to their usual performance on knowledge exercises, Western adults did best on geography items and least well on economics items. Among the exercises on which they performed particularly well relative to the national level of performance was the exercise concerning the role of Spanish-speaking Americans in our history and culture (RKH13D). This is not really surprising considering the high concentration of Spanish surnamed Americans in the western states.

White adults generally performed above the level of all adults on knowledge exercises. Among the exercises on which their performance was particularly high relative to their usual performance were those involving the use of a ballot (RKP18A-E) and knowledge of the nomination procedure for presidential candidates.

Black adults do poorly on ballot question

Black adults performed as well as the national population of adults on the exercise involving knowledge of the role of Black Americans in our history and culture. But relative to their usual performance, they did particularly poorly on the use of a ballot, scoring 30 percentage points below the national level for adults. On the exercise on the procedures for

nominating presidential candidates, Black adults performed 33 percentage points lower than the national population of adults. Adults who indicated that neither parent had attended high school also did particularly poorly on these exercises relative to their performance on all knowledge exercises.

Those adults indicating that the highest level of education of either parent was some high school did most poorly on geography exercises, while those who indicated that either parent had graduated from high school did best on these same exercises.

Parental education is an important variable even at adult level

Adults indicating that either parent had more than a high school education scored above the national population of adults on all but three of the exercises in this area. Among the exercises on which their results were particularly good both relative to the nation and their own performance were those in the topic geography. On the exercises involving the use of a ballot, they scored 20 percentage points above the national level for all adults. The difference was about the same for the exercise on the procedure for presidential nominations.

Low metro adults low on election questions

Relative to their usual performance, adults from neighborhoods categorized as low metro did particularly poorly on the exercises involving knowledge of the election process. On the ballot exercises, results were 26 percentage points below the nation as a whole. Performance on the exercise on presidential nomination procedures was even lower--28 points separated their results from the national population of adults.

CHAPTER 4

ATTITUDES

What young people learn about freedom, equality, justice, respect and cooperation is ultimately the key to the future of a democratic society. The debate still rages as to how and what attitudes should be learned or transmitted. Some would insist that learning comes only experientially in this area and that the heart of value education does not lie in the subject matter of social studies courses, no matter how well they are organized and developed. Others hold that values can and should be taught with the aid of instructional materials that can guarantee appropriate outcomes. No matter what camp educators belong to, however, there is agreement that attitudes are difficult to measure accurately.

Attitudes toward First Amendment rights assessed

National Assessment's survey of attitudes does not resolve this debate; however, it does provide some indicators of the national value consensus at four age levels. The attitudes area has been divided into two basic topics. The first concentrates on the commitment to the rights guaranteed in the First Amendment, which are basic to the freedom and fulfillment of all people in our society. Respondents are required to make value judgments about a variety of situations in which the freedoms of speech, press, religion, petition and assembly are involved. The exercises are geared to measure attitudes toward these rights and not knowledge of them. The questions purposefully ask whether or not individuals SHOULD be allowed to do certain things, not whether in fact they can by law do them.

Attitudes about self and others in democratic society assessed

The second topic covered in the attitudes area deals with commitments that are more individual in nature yet no less important to the functioning of a democratic society. They center on the conflict between the worth of the individual on the one hand, and a value system, to a large part shaped by the demands of modern industrial society, in which status, achievement, productivity, efficiency and institutional permanence are extolled. This topic deals with attitudes toward participation in school and the community,

sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others, respect for the views of others and belief in the rule of law.

As was the case in the skills and knowledge areas of the assessment, not all exercises were administered at each age level. Table 5 indicates the number of attitude exercises administered at each age level by area, topic and subtopic.

TABLE 5. Number of Attitude Exercises by Area, Topic and Subtopic

	Age Level			
	9	13	17	Adult
III. Attitudes/general area	14	19	28	25
A. Attitudes/rights of the First Amendment	1	7	13	12
1. Believes in the freedoms of the First Amendment and can justify that belief				
B. Attitudes/the worth of the individual	13	12	15	13
1. Believes that people should become involved in making decisions that effect their lives	5	2	3	3
2. Is sensitive to the needs and feelings of others	4	3	3	2
3. Respects the rights and views of others	4	6	5	5
4. Believes in the rule of law and can justify that belief	0	2	4	3

Overall National Performance

Adults and 17-year-olds perform at same level, 13s somewhat lower

Thirteen attitude exercises were administered to 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds and young adults. In general, the performance at ages 17 and adult was about the same. Thirteen-year-olds, on the other hand, consistently performed below the other two ages.

Performance on poverty items low at all ages

Performance levels on two exercises measuring a general sensitivity to the reasons for poverty and a commitment to do something about it (RAB09, RAB10) were particularly low at all age levels. Only one 17-year-old in four was able to give three acceptable reasons why people living in poor neighborhoods do not move (RAB09). Even fewer young adults (20%) and 13-year-olds (19%) could do so. Only 40% of the adults showed a commitment to removing poverty and could suggest two ways of doing so (Exercise RAB10). The percentage dropped slightly (38%) at age 17 and even more at age 13 (30%).

Approximately one third of the 17-year-olds and adults, and three out of five 13-year-olds denied or did not unreservedly support the right of a newspaper to criticize elected public officials. Some respondents at all three ages felt that citizens younger than legal voting age should not even have the right to write letters to elected government officials or publicly express their views on political issues (RAR02).

Fewer adults support student participation in school decisions

Among the more interesting results were those on an exercise involving the participation of students in developing the school curriculum. Eighty-five percent of the 17-year-olds thought teen-agers should help decide what courses should be offered in their school system and gave an acceptable reason for their decision. In comparison, only 60% of the adults felt the same way. Sixty-four percent of the 13-year-olds gave acceptable responses on this exercise.

Ten additional exercises were administered only to 17-year-olds and young adults. Results were generally similar for both age levels. A two-part exercise in which the right to picket was at issue is particularly noteworthy. The percentage of respondents affirming the right to picket both a rock festival (RAR12A) and police station (RAR12B) was low. Only 35% of the 17-year-olds and 42% of the adults felt that people should be allowed to picket both a rock festival and police station. Almost as many 17-year-olds felt people should not be allowed to picket *either* one (30%).

Attitudes toward right to picket ambivalent

Looking at the results for the exercise parts separately, the percentages improve, but in general less than one half of the nation's 17-year-olds and young adults unreservedly support the right to picket.

A complete listing of the attitude area exercises and the national percentage of success at every age at which they were administered is presented in Table 6.

Overall Group Performance

Exhibits 11-15 explained

Exhibits 11-15 graphically display the typical attitude area performance patterns for each National Assessment group at ages 9, 13, 17 and young adult. Each bar represents the middle 50% of the group's exercise differences as explained in Exhibit A (page 8). By comparing the median difference and the middle

TABLE 6. Complete Listing of Attitude Area Exercises

Exercise #	Exercise Description	Nat'l Level of Acceptable Performance (Percent)			
		Age 9	Age 13	Age 17	Adult
A. Rights of the First Amendment					
	1. Believes in the freedoms of the First Amendment and can justify that belief.				
RAR01	Making fun of religious differences	73	87	91	--
RAR02	Should young citizen write to a public official?	--	58	80	73
UAR03	Freedom of speech and press/Unreleased	--	73	80	77
UAR04	Right to petition/Unreleased	--	--	81	82
RAR05	Public criticism of US troops abroad	--	--	81	81
UAR06	Freedom of speech and worship/Unreleased	--	64	78	78
RAR07	Religious freedom for elected officials	--	59	63	56
RAR08	Newspaper's right to criticize public officials	--	41	66	71
UAR09	Freedom of speech and press/Unreleased	--	--	58	70
UAR10	Freedom of the press/Unreleased	--	--	82	80
RAR11	Right to assemble in public park	--	54	80	72
RAR12A	Freedom to picket rock festival	--	--	42	56
RAR12B	Freedom to picket police station	--	--	40	44
B. The worth of the individual					
	1. Believes people should be involved in decisions which affect their lives.				
UAB01A	Making decisions in school/Unreleased	87	--	--	--
RAB01B	Making decisions in school/Social Studies report	73	--	--	--
UAB01C	Making decisions in school/Unreleased	78	--	--	--
RAB01D	Making decisions in school/Project	78	--	--	--
RAB01E	Making decisions in school/Extra help	81	--	--	--
RAB02	Should teenagers decide on courses?	--	64	85	60
UAB03	Voting behavior/Unreleased	--	57	72	85
RAB04	Community control of neighborhood	--	--	80	63

TABLE 6--*Continued*

Exercise #	Exercise Description	Nat'l Level of Acceptable Performance (Percent)			
		Age 9	Age 13	Age 17	Adult
	2. Is sensitive to the needs and feelings of others.				
RAB05	Explaining games	98	--	--	--
UAB06	Helping injured friend	79	--	--	--
RAB07	Recess space	72	--	--	--
RAB08	Language difficulty	80	92	88	--
RAB09	Reasons for poverty	--	19	24	20
RAB10	Removing conditions of poverty	--	30	38	40
	3. Respects the rights and views of others.				
RAB11	Religious observance	87	--	--	--
UAB12	Class consciousness	27	68	--	--
RAB13	Conformity to peer pressure	30	71	84	89
UAB14	Golden Rule	82	83	84	86
UAB15	Willingness to listen	--	72	75	59
RAB16	Should race influence employment?	--	74	90	90
RAB17	Political obligation to minority groups	--	--	79	78
	4. Believes in the "Rule of Law" and can justify that belief.				
UAB18	Legal protection for all/Unreleased	--	75	85	77
UAB19	Legal protection for all/Unreleased	--	--	89	81
RAB20	Vandalism: Crime or Prank?	--	55	51	--
UAB21	Citizen's responsibility/Unreleased	--	--	70	91

50% of exercise differences of a group to the national level of performance, we can ascertain how well each group performed on the attitude exercises. By looking at the differences within a particular group at all four age levels, we can see if relative performance tended to vary with age.

At age 9, 14 attitude exercises were administered, so a bar represents those 8 exercise differences that comprise the middle 50% of the entire range of 14 differences. At age 13, 19 exercises were administered. In this case the bar represents the middle 9 exercise differences for a group. Twenty-eight exercises were administered to 17-year-olds, so each bar represents the middle 14 differences. Adults took 25 exercises; therefore, a bar represents the middle 13 exercise differences for a group. The darkened horizontal line crossing each bar is the median difference for that group. The positive and negative numbers along the vertical axis represent differences (in percentage points) from the national performance level.

Performance by Region

Southeast below nation

In general, southeasterners performed below the national level of success at all four age levels. Southeastern adults did most poorly relative to their peers nationally, registering a median exercise difference approximately 7 percentage points below the national level. At the other ages, this difference was not as great.

Western results variable

Nine-year-olds, 13-year-olds and 17-year-olds from the West performed generally below the national levels; however, adults from the Western region performed above the national level of all adults.

Central results slightly above nation

Respondents from the Central region tended to perform above the national level of success at all four age levels.

Northeast above nation

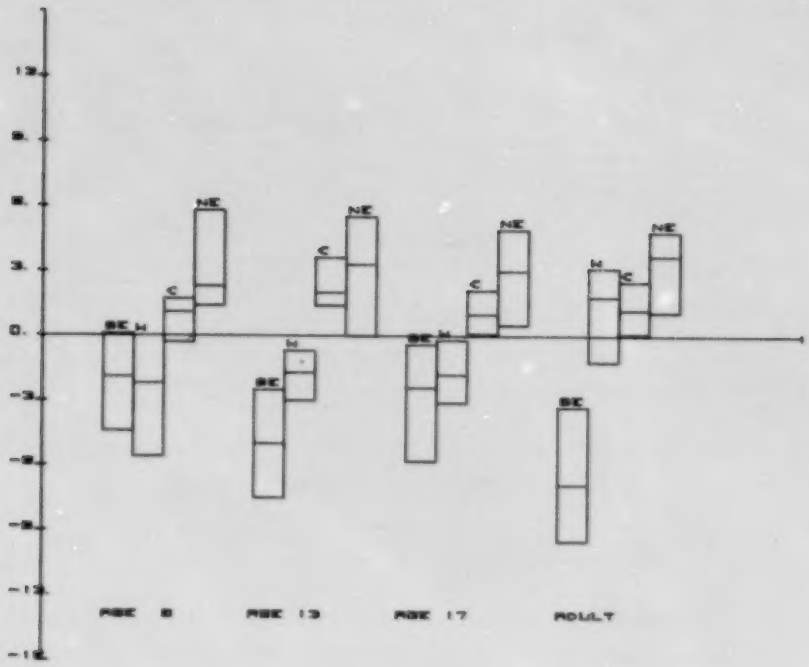
Results from the Northeast were generally above the results for the rest of the nation (see Exhibit 11).

Male-Female Performance

Females outperform males until adult

Exhibit 12 indicates that females perform better than males on attitudinal exercises at ages 9, 13 and

EXHIBIT 11. Attitude Performance: Regional Results Compared to National Results



SE - Southeast
W - West
C - Central
NE - Northeast
□ - National level of performance
— - Median difference

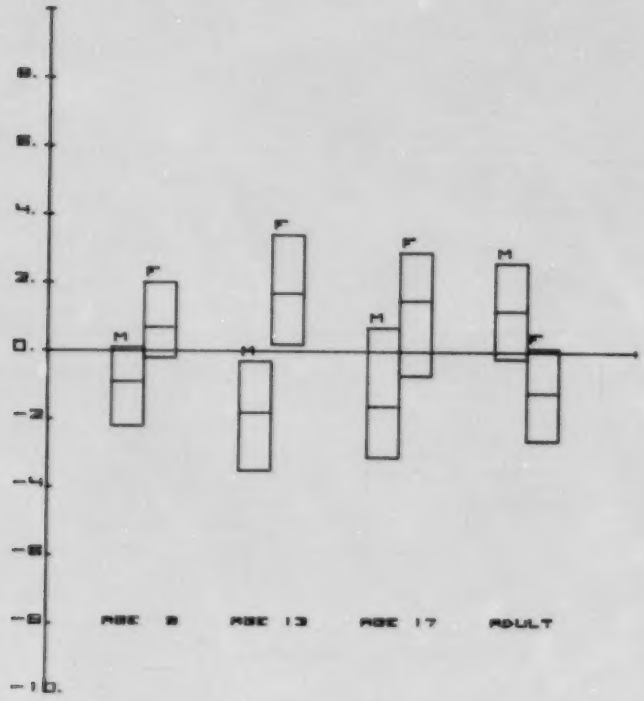
17; however, by young adult this pattern abruptly switches and males perform better than females.

Black-White Performance

Whites consistently above nation; Blacks consistently below

Exhibit 13 displays the great disparity between the performance of Blacks and Whites on these exercises. White performance levels are consistently above the national performance levels; Black performance is consistently below the national levels.

EXHIBIT 12. Attitude Performance: Male-Female Results Compared to National Results



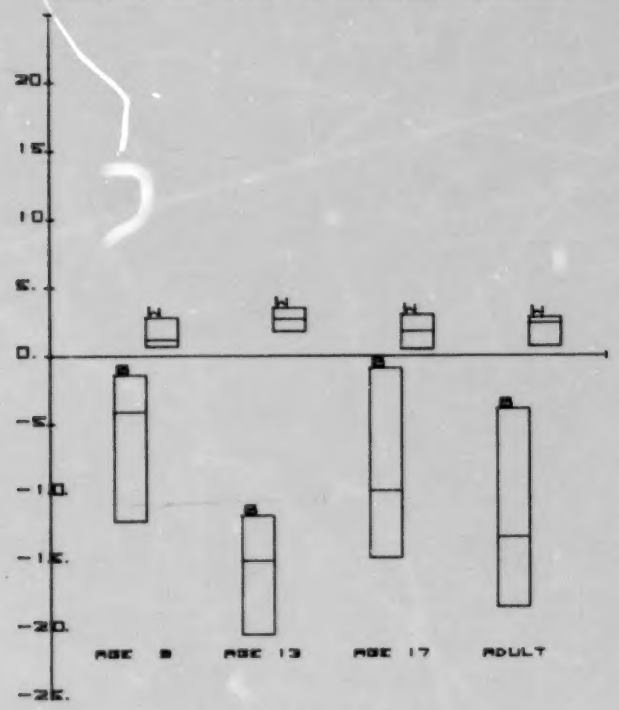
□ - National level of performance
— - Median difference

Performance by Level of Parental Education

Educational level of parent is important variable

The median exercise difference for respondents at all four ages who indicated that at least one parent had more than a high school education was above the national level (Exhibit 14). The difference for those indicating that neither parent attended high school was below the nation. The median exercise difference for respondents indicating that either parent had some high school was below the national levels at all ages as well. However, at ages 9 and young adult these differences were not large. Results for 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds and 17-year-olds indicating that either parent had graduated from high school were at the national levels.

EXHIBIT 13. Attitude Performance: Black-White Results Compared to National Results



□ - National level of performance
— - Median difference

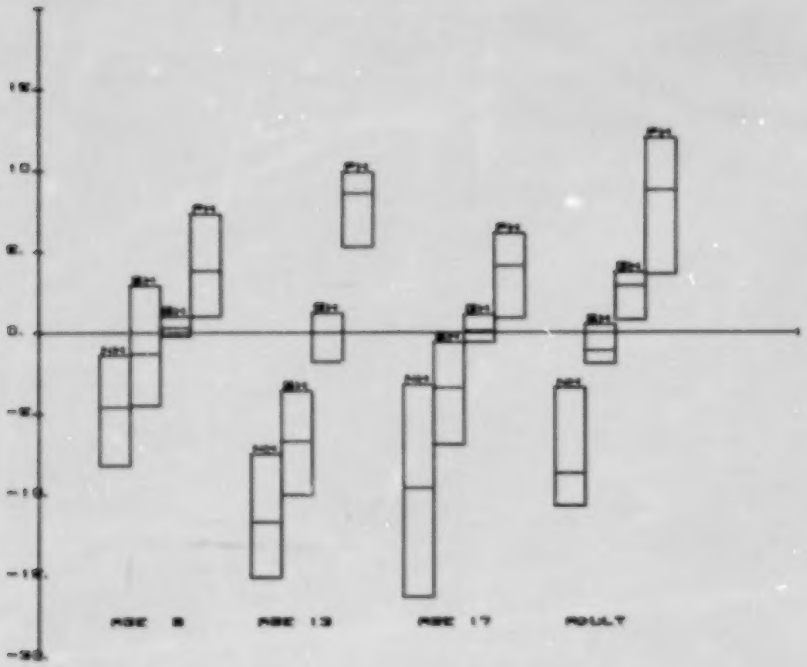
Performance by Size and Type of Community

High metro and low metro represent extremes of community performance

Only three size and type of community (STOC) groups performed consistently above or below the national levels at all four ages. Results for the low metro group were considerably below the nation. The high metro group performed above national levels at all ages. Rural respondents performed below the nation at all age levels.

Residents from the main big city performed slightly below national levels at ages 9, 13 and 17 and above the national level at age adult. Those from the urban fringe reversed this pattern, performing slightly below the national level at age 9 and somewhat above it at ages 13, 17 and adult (Exhibit 15).

EXHIBIT 14. Attitude Performance: Parental Education Results Compared to National Results



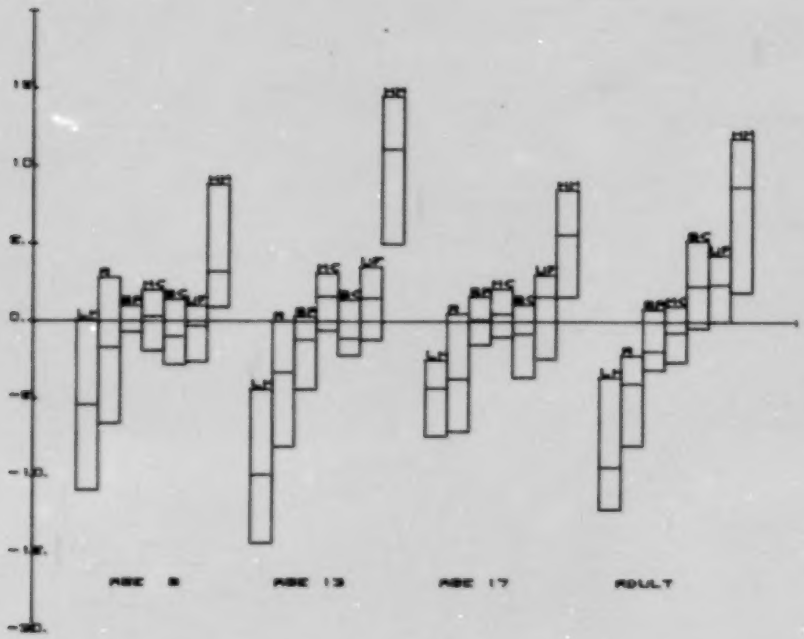
NHS - No high school
SHS - Some high school
GHS - Graduated high school
PHS - Post high school
□ - National level of performance
— - Median difference

Patterns of Group Performance

Reporting of group performance described

Results for the attitude exercises have been analyzed in a variety of ways. In some cases the median exercise difference in each of the two topics and for the area as a whole provides information about the attitudes of the various National Assessment groups toward First Amendment rights or the worth of the individual. For example, the median exercise difference for Southeastern 13-year-olds is 5 percentage points below the national level of success; and, therefore, we can safely say that this group generally performs below the level of all 13-year-olds on these exercises. We also know that the median exercise difference for the exercises involving First Amendment rights is more than 8 percentage points below the national level,

EXHIBIT 15. Attitude Performance: Size and Type of Community Results Compared to National Results



LM - Low metro
R - Extreme rural
SP - Small places
MC - Medium city
BC - Main big city
UF - Urban fringe
HM - High metro
□ - National level of performance
— - Median difference

while the median difference for the exercises included under the topic belief in the worth of the individual is only 4 percentage points below the national level. We can say, then, that Southeastern 13-year-olds tended to do more poorly on exercises involving basic constitutional rights.

In other cases, typical results may not prove noteworthy; however, the results on individual exercises may. In cases when a group performed above or below the national level of performance on an individual exercise, or a number of exercises, these results are

also reported and potential patterns, if any, are discussed.[1]

Nine-Year-Olds

Fourteen exercises included in the attitudes area were administered to 9-year-olds; 13 of these are included in the topic belief in the worth of the individual. Because of the limited number of exercises, an analysis of group performance patterns at this age level will not be attempted.

Thirteen-Year-Olds

Nineteen attitudinal exercises were administered to 13-year-olds. Seven of these involve attitudes toward First Amendment rights; 12 are in the topic belief in the worth of the individual.

Southeast 13s do most poorly on First Amendment rights

Results for Southeastern 13-year-olds were generally below the national results. Performance on exercises involving attitudes toward First Amendment rights was poor relative to their results on the worth exercises. On three exercises involving First Amendment rights, southeasterners scored between 10 and 17 points below the levels of 13-year-olds in general. These exercises measured attitudes toward the rights of religious freedom for elected officials (RAR07), the right of newspapers to criticize public officials (RAR08) and the right to assemble in a public park (RAR11). On one exercise, *Vandalism: Crime or Prank?* (RAB20), involving the rule of law, they scored above the national performance level.

Relative to their usual performance, Central 13-year-olds did particularly well on one exercise about the right to assemble in a public park: Results were 8 percentage points above the national results of 13-year-olds.

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[1]Only those exercise differences which vary from the national percentage at the .05 level of significance will be discussed. Therefore, we can be relatively sure that the variations we describe as above or below the national level have not occurred by chance.

Northeast 13s do best on First Amendment rights

Northeastern 13-year-olds performed better (relative to the nation) on exercises involving First Amendment rights than on the worth exercises. On Exercise RAR07, *Religious Freedom for Elected Officials,* this group scored almost 12 percentage points above the national level.

Among the exercises on which females performed better than males were three that involved a commitment to social participation and a strong positive self-image. One of these is not released but involves voting behavior (UAB03). The other two involve the participation of young people in school and community affairs. One exercise, RAB02, asks if teen-agers should be involved in making decisions about what courses would be offered in school. The other, Exercise RAR02, asks if teen-agers should be able to write letters to elected government officials or express their views on political issues. Almost 10 percentage points separated male-female scores on these two exercises.

Thirteen-year-olds indicating that either parent had some high school education did particularly poorly on two exercises involving First Amendment rights. They scored more than 13 points below the national level of success on *Religious Freedom for Elected Officials* (RAR07) and *Newspaper's Right to Criticize Elected Officials* (RAR08).

Low metro 13s do most poorly on First Amendment rights

Thirteen-year-olds living in neighborhoods classified as low metro appeared to perform more poorly on exercises involving First Amendment rights than on the worth exercises. Two exercises included in the topic belief in the worth of the individual, however, were among the most troublesome for this group. Both involved conformity to peer pressure either directly (RAB13) or indirectly (UAB03), and results were approximately 20 percentage points below the national level of performance. Differences for rural 13-year-olds on these two exercises were also well below their usual differences.

Thirteen-year-olds from neighborhoods categorized as high metro tended to do better on exercises involving First Amendment rights; however, their scores on attitude exercises in general were well above those of the national population of 13-year-olds.

Seventeen-Year-Olds

Twenty-eight attitude exercises were administered to 17-year-olds. Thirteen are in the topic rights of the First Amendment, and 15 are included in the topic belief in the worth of the individual.

Southeastern 17s do poorly on First Amendment rights

Seventeen-year-olds from the Southeast did most poorly on exercises involving attitudes toward First Amendment rights. Among exercises on which their performance relative to national performance was particularly low were *Freedom to Picket a Rock Festival* (RAR12A) and *Newspaper's Right to Criticize Public Officials* (RAR08) on which they scored 9 percentage points below the national results. On another exercise concerning the rights of an atheist to hold political office (RAR07), Southeastern 17-year-olds scored 16 points below the nation. However, on an exercise involving the defense of someone being chided because of religious differences (RAR01), this group did better than 17-year-olds nationally. On two exercises involving belief in the rule of law, southern 17-year-olds did particularly well. Results for *Vandalism: Crime or Prank?* (RAB20) were 10 percentage points above the national level.

Northeast 17s do best on First Amendment rights

Seventeen-year-olds from the Northeast performed better relative to the nation on exercises involving First Amendment rights than on the worth exercises. Two exercises on which they did unusually well involved the right of religious freedom for elected officials (RAR07) and the public's right to criticize the use of United States military forces abroad (RAR05). Two exercises on which they scored below national levels involved the issue of a citizen's responsibility to uphold the rule of law in cases that might have usual circumstances. On one of these, *Vandalism: Crime or Prank?*, Northeastern 17-year-olds scored 11 points below the national population of 17-year-olds.

Male-female differences at 17

Among the exercises on which males performed better than females were five involving attitudes toward the First Amendment rights of freedom of religion (RAR07), press and speech (RAR08, UAR09) and the right to picket either a police station (RAR12B) or rock festival (RAR12A). In comparison, females at age 17 did particularly well in comparison to males on exercises involving the belief in the worth of the individual. Results for females on 12 of the 15 exercises in this topic were above those of the males. Exercises on which the differences were unusually

large include: *Vandalism: Crime or Prank?* (RAB20), *Political Obligation to Minority Groups* (RAB17) and *Community Control* (RAB04). Between 8 and 14 percentage points separated male-female performance on these exercises.

Blacks better on worth of individual exercises than on rights exercises

Although Black performance in general was well below the national level at age 17, this group tended to do better on the exercises included in the topic belief in the worth of the individual. On 7 of the 15 exercises in this topic, results were as good as those for all 17-year-olds. Blacks did 5 percentage points better than the national population at age 17 on one exercise involving the right to picket a police station to protest alleged brutality (RAR12B). However, on another similar exercise involving the right to picket a rock festival (RAR12A), Blacks scored 19 percentage points below the national level. Among the exercises on which they did as well as other 17-year-olds were: *Community Control* (RAB04), *Removing Conditions of Poverty* (RAB10) and *Should Race Influence Employment?* (RAB16).

No parental education group does best on worth of individual exercises; most poorly on First Amendment rights

Relative to their performance compared to the nation, 17-year-olds indicating that neither parent had attended high school did best on exercises involving individual worth and quite poorly on exercises involving First Amendment rights. Performance on 12 of the 13 exercises involving the First Amendment rights were well below the national levels of success, ranging from 7 to 22 percentage points below the results for all 17-year-olds.

Seventeen-year-olds living in rural communities appeared to do more poorly on the rights topic than on the worth topic, relative to the national performance. On two exercises involving the rule of law, *Vandalism: Crime or Prank?* (RAB20), and another stressing a citizen's responsibility (UAB21), rural 17-year-olds did better than 17-year-olds generally. Interestingly on another exercise in which the right to picket a police station is in question (RAR12B), results for this group were 13 percentage points below the national results.

Seventeen-year-olds living in neighborhoods classified as high metro generally performed above the national population of 17-year-olds. They did particularly well on exercises involving First Amendment rights.

Adults

Southeast adults do most poorly on First Amendment rights

Adults from the Southeast performed most poorly on exercises involving First Amendment rights. Results on all 12 of the exercises in this topic were below the national level for adults. On one exercise in which the right of an atheist to hold public office was presented, results were 20 points below the national level.

Male adults do best on rights exercises

Male adults tended to perform best on exercises measuring attitudes toward First Amendment rights: Male scores were from 7 to 16 percentage points above those of females on exercises involving religious freedom (UAR06, RAR07), the freedom to picket (RAR12A and B) and the right of assembly (RAR11). Females did considerably better on three exercises involving participation in the decision-making process (RAB02, UAB03, RAB04) and two involving respect for the rights and views of others (RAB16, UAB14).

Black adults do best on individual worth exercises

Black adults did best, relative to the nation, on exercises involving individual worth. These included exercises on the commitment to open housing (RAB04), the reasons for poverty (RAB09), whether race should influence employment (RAB16) and whether or not teenagers should have a say in planning their curriculum (RAB02).

Adults indicating that neither parent had attended high school did relatively well on exercises involving belief in individual worth but quite poorly on those involving attitudes toward First Amendment rights. Performance on all 12 exercises in this topic were below the national levels. For adults indicating that at least one parent had more than a high school education, the reverse was true. Scores on all of these exercises were well above the national levels.

Relative to national performance, low metropolitan adults did best on exercises involving belief in individual worth.

Adults living in extreme rural areas did most poorly on exercises involving First Amendment rights. Results on three out of every four of these exercises were below the national results. On two exercises involving the right to picket (RAR12A and B) and one involving the right to assemble (RAR11), results were from 11 to 21 points below the general adult population.

Adults from large metropolitan areas (main big city) did particularly well on exercises involving First Amendment rights. Relative to their usual performance, they did best on the community control question, scoring 9 percentage points above the national population of adults. On another exercise involving the obligation of politicians to minority views (RAB17), they performed poorly relative to their usual results. In this case, results were 7 points below the national level of adults.

Adults characterized as high metropolitan did particularly well on exercises involving First Amendment rights. Among the exercises on which their performance was unusually high were two involving the right to picket (RAR12A and B) and one involving an atheist's right to hold public office (RAR07).

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

The Social Studies assessment included 163 different exercises, some of which had more than one part and many of which were administered at more than one age. Any attempt to compress all the data into a few pages of meaningful generalizations is therefore an extremely difficult and potentially dangerous task. Extreme caution must be taken not to misrepresent what the statistics, exhibits and tables reflect.

The statistics National Assessment used to document the generalizations on the following pages are numerous and complex. Complete statistical documentation will be available for those wishing to research the issues the assessment has raised. Only a small part of the available data has been considered in this volume, yet some generalizations, however tentative, can be made to describe the overall results of the assessment.

Overall National Results

In order to make some general statements about national performance, the exercises within each of the topics were ranked from highest to lowest percentage of success; and the median performance level was identified.

A caution about the results

A rank order of these medians by topic was then made. The median is the one best measure for the central tendency of a group of exercises. It represents that result above and below which 50% of the results lie. However, in dealing with national results, medians do present problems and caution must be taken not to attach any absolute value to them. One cannot say conclusively that a median represents anything but a relative position. On any given set of exercises, the level of performance may be a result of the content, format or the difficulty of the exercises. The reader must be willing to assume the comparability of exercises or groups of exercises in order to apply any

absolute value to them. However, if caution is taken, this kind of analysis may still be useful. Table 7 presents a rank ordering from highest to lowest of the median national performance level for each of the Social Studies topics containing at least 11 exercises at ages 9, 13, 17 and adult. Topics are ordered from the highest to the lowest median percentages of success. The actual median percentages have not been provided since they are not in and of themselves meaningful and could be misleading. Comparisons across age levels should not be attempted because of the different numbers of exercises involved.

TABLE 7. Rank Order of Median National Performance by Topic

Age 9

Attitudes/The worth of the individual
Skills/Obtaining information
Skills/Interpreting information
Knowledge/Geography
Knowledge/History

Age 13

Skills/Obtaining information
Skills/Interpreting information
Attitudes/The worth of the individual
Knowledge/Political science
Knowledge/History
Knowledge/Geography
Knowledge/Economics

Age 17

Skills/Interpreting information
Attitudes/The worth of the individual
Attitudes/First Amendment rights
Knowledge/Political science
Knowledge/History
Knowledge/Economics
Knowledge/Geography

Adults

Skills/Interpreting information
Attitudes/The worth of the individual
Knowledge/Political science
Attitudes/First Amendment rights
Knowledge/History
Knowledge/Economics
Knowledge/Geography

Recall of factual information troublesome at all ages

Reviewing the table some patterns do emerge at all four age levels. As might be expected, exercises involving recall of factual information, especially in the disciplines of history, geography and economics, are troublesome at all age levels. Although different sets of exercises were administered at each age level, the topics all are found in a relatively low position. At ages 9 and 13, respondents tend to gather information better than they can interpret it. However, by 17 and young adult the median performance in interpreting skills rank the highest among the Social Studies topics we measured.

Table 8 explained

Cross-age analyses can be made by comparing the median national performance of exercises taken at more than one age level. We can compare the performance of 13-year-olds to that of 17-year-olds, as well as the performance of 17-year-olds to that of young adults on the same exercises. Table 8 displays the median percentages of success and the number of exercises being compared at ages 13 and 17 and 17 and young adult.

17s consistently perform above 13-year-olds in all areas

As Table 8 indicates, 17-year-olds consistently perform above the level of 13-year-olds when comparisons are made of those exercises administered at both ages. On the other hand, the median performance levels for those exercises administered to both 17-year-olds and young adults are quite similar. Seventeen-year-olds generally performed between 1 and 3 percentage points above the adults. Only in the exercises involving First Amendment rights was their median performance noticeably different. The median performance level for 17-year-olds on these exercises was 7 percentage points above that of the adults.

17 and adult performance quite similar

The national results reported in this volume provide a great deal of information about the skills, knowledges and attitudes that Americans, ages 9, 13, 17 and 26-35, have in the social studies. We must now make informed evaluations based on actual and expected performance. For some of us, the results will indicate deficiences in American education that must be corrected. Others will perhaps be satisfied with the achievement levels of most young Americans. Clearly, these results are open to discussion. National Assessment has provided some of the data with which an intelligent discussion can and should proceed.

TABLE 8. Overlap Comparisons, Ages 13-17 and 17-A

Area and Topic	# of Exercises		Median Percentages of Success			
			Age	Age	Age	Adult
	13-17	17-A	13	17	17	
Skills area	38	39	69%	79%	79%	76%
Obtaining information	10	9	NO ANALYSIS			
Interpreting information	28	30	76	86	83	78
Knowledge area	65	83	60	72	67	70
Economics	14	18	50	63	59	56
Geography	8	12	NO ANALYSIS		45	42
History	34	42	62	69	64	65
Political science	20	26	62	79	74	74
Attitudes area	18	25	64	80	80	77
First Amendment rights	7	1[illegible]	NO ANALYSIS		79	72
The worth of the individual	11	13	71	84	80	78

Overall Group Results

Certain groups perform in very consistent fashion

The exhibits of overall group performance (Exhibits 1-15) found in the previous chapters on skills, knowledges and attitudes suggest some clear patterns for National Assessment groups at all four age levels. We can say with some degree of certainty that southeasterners, Blacks, those whose parents have had less than a high school education or those who live in a metropolitan area where a high proportion of residents are unemployed or on welfare, most likely would perform below national levels on the Social Studies exercises measured by National Assessment. On the other hand, Whites, those whose parents have more than a high school education or those who live in a metropolitan area where most of the residents are professional or managerial types, most likely would perform above the national levels on these exercises.

It is important to recognize, however, that membership in any of these groups should not be assumed to be the cause of a group's performance. The groups are descriptive and not interpretive in nature. For example, the data indicate that Black performance levels are significantly below those of the nation as a whole. However, this cannot be interpreted to mean the

difference is due to skin color. Many other factors such as socioeconomic status, health care, quality of school facilities, inherent cultural bias of testing instruments and others too numerous to mention correlate highly with Blackness in our society.

The differences we report do, however, exist and must be faced. More research needs to be done to attempt to ferret out the causes for differences in achievement. Hopefully, our data provides the impetus for this.

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11/72